

A CAROLINA A CAVALIER



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GEORGE CARY EGGLESTON

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A
CAROLINA
CAVALIER





“ Good-bye, Sweetheart.”

(See page 100.)

A 
CAROLINA
CAVALIER

A ROMANCE *of the* AMERICAN
REVOLUTION

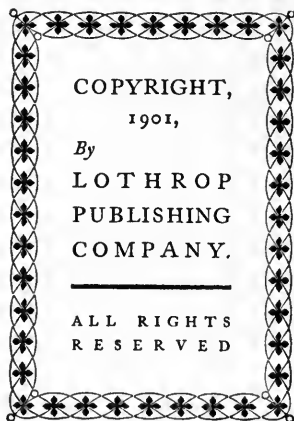
By GEORGE CARY EGGLESTON

AUTHOR *of*
"A REBEL'S RECOLLECTIONS"
"SOUTHERN SOLDIER STORIES"
"THE LAST OF THE FLATBOATS"
ETC., ETC.

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TABLE *of* CONTENTS

<i>CHAPTER I</i>	PAGE
Which goes to show that an introduction may be dispensed with upon occasion	11
<i>CHAPTER II</i>	
Two men in a boat	29
<i>CHAPTER III</i>	
In which Roger Alton encounters an embarrassment	44
<i>CHAPTER IV</i>	
In which destiny takes the helm	69
<i>CHAPTER V</i>	
In which Helen tells a little story	87
<i>CHAPTER VI</i>	
“Good-by, sweetheart”	94
<i>CHAPTER VII</i>	
In which Roger Alton encounters the enemy	104
<i>CHAPTER VIII</i>	
Alton House	125
<i>CHAPTER IX</i>	
Jack	140

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TABLE *of* CONTENTS

<i>CHAPTER X</i>	PAGE
Men in council	149
<i>CHAPTER XI</i>	
A love and life perplexity	168
<i>CHAPTER XII</i>	
Tiger Bill	174
<i>CHAPTER XIII</i>	
Tiger Bill's letter	184
<i>CHAPTER XIV</i>	
A stirrup cup	190
<i>CHAPTER XV</i>	
In which Roger Alton loses his temper	200
<i>CHAPTER XVI</i>	
Humphreys	219
<i>CHAPTER XVII</i>	
A first smell of powder	228
<i>CHAPTER XVIII</i>	
A love letter	238



TABLE *of* CONTENTS

<i>CHAPTER XIX</i>	PAGE
A battle in the dark	243
<i>CHAPTER XX</i>	
Which maidenly modesty makes very brief .	258
<i>CHAPTER XXI</i>	
In which Captain Alton meets the enemy and a friend	260
<i>CHAPTER XXII</i>	
Under the iron heel	274
<i>CHAPTER XXIII</i>	
War's new birth	286
<i>CHAPTER XXIV</i>	
In which an enthusiastic young gentleman saves a hundred guineas	305
<i>CHAPTER XXV</i>	
Captain Jack's devices	311
<i>CHAPTER XXVI</i>	
In the hands of the enemy	326
<i>CHAPTER XXVII</i>	
"Tarleton's Quarter"	338



TABLE *of* CONTENTS

<i>CHAPTER XXVIII</i>	PAGE
Humphreys' story	353
<i>CHAPTER XXIX</i>	
In which Alton House receives visitors . . .	368
<i>CHAPTER XXX</i>	
Marlborough brings news	381
<i>CHAPTER XXXI</i>	
Captain Jack's defence	390
<i>CHAPTER XXXII</i>	
Fire and sword	408
<i>CHAPTER XXXIII</i>	
The papers in the case	421
<i>CHAPTER XXXIV</i>	
The end of a complexity	435
<i>CHAPTER XXXV</i>	
In which Marlborough attains military command	441
<i>CHAPTER XXXVI</i>	
Which brings the war and the story to an end .	445

A LITTLE FOREWORD

IT is as a romance only that I offer this book. In using the historic events of a heroic time as a background, and the sentiments of a heroic people as a setting for my story, I have endeavored to make all my historical references accurate. Beyond that I have attempted nothing of the historian's task. I make no pretence of right to invade the domain of that superb scholarship which is just now writing our country's wonder-story anew and more worthily than has ever been done before.

Patriotism, and an unflinching sense of honor—love and heroic devotion—these alone are my themes. If I have succeeded in any worthy degree in illustrating these high virtues and in reflecting the spirit and sentiment of the people among whom this story is laid, I have accomplished all that I set out to do.

GEORGE CARY EGGLESTON.

CULROSS-ON-LAKE-GEORGE,
September, 1900.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

I

WHICH *goes to* SHOW *that an* INTRODUCTION
MAY *be* DISPENSED WITH *upon* OCCASION

THE sun was shining fervidly through the pale, rose-colored haze, with listless, sleepy sultriness, as if that were altogether the easiest thing it could do, and as if it felt itself quite unequal to the task of doing anything more energetic or more self-restrained on that soggy, moist, oppressive January day, in the year of our Lord, 1779. Not a breath of air from land or sea, was stirring in the little Bahama seaport town. The hazy, tropical atmosphere, lay like a moist, hot blanket over the land and upon the sea. The people of the town were for the most part swelteringly asleep upon hot couches, or dozing

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

away the hours somewhere in the shady recesses of their hovel-homes.

Along the rude and tumble-down wharves the only activities were those of buzzing insects, flying about with no other apparent purpose than that of fanning themselves with weary wings.

Three British ships of war lay like logs in the harbor, with scorching decks and with sails spread out in the listless air to dry, if that might be, in an atmosphere saturated with vapor that just missed being steam. A dozen or so small boats of varying shapes and characters were drawn up on the blistering sands of the beach and covered with tarpaulins as a protection against the warping, seam-opening intensity of the vertical sunbeams.

Everything about the shore seemed in a comatose state—with a single exception. That exception appeared in the person of a well-dressed young man who came down to the water's edge in reckless disregard of the heat and with a step whose elasticity marked him at once as a stranger, not long enough sojourning in the island to have fallen into the all-pervading doze. He passed rapidly among the boats, inspecting each of them in turn with minute scrutiny, as if he were cross-questioning them

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

about matters concerning which he was mightily interested to learn the uttermost detail of fact. The eagerness of his scrutiny, and the alertness with which he passed from one to another of the inverted boats, getting down upon his hands and knees now and then to look under one of them, would have attracted attention and excited curiosity if there had been anybody there sufficiently awake to observe his actions. But the only other person within sight—a negro boy who pretended to be fishing off the end of a decaying pier—had fallen asleep in the sun, and a blue-bottle fly was practicing gymnastics around the tip of his nose unmolested.

Presently the young man, who from his dress and manner would have been set down as an Englishman of the upper middle class off on his travels, finished his inspection of the boats and walked rapidly to the cabin of the old Spaniard who owned them. Entering the open door without ceremony, he disturbed the midday slumber of the worthy waterman and presently discovered that he understood not one word of English. Fortunately our young gentleman spoke French and Italian with ease, and the boatman had picked up enough of those tongues, so closely akin to his own, to make

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

a negotiation possible though the progress of it was lame and halting.

By dint of much reiteration and many substitutions of phrase, and frequent lapses from French into Italian and from Italian into French, the young man managed at last to make the older one understand that he wished to have one of his larger boats uncovered and turned over for more careful examination, with a view to her purchase.

“To-morrow,” said the Spaniard, after the procrastinating habit of his race.

“No!” answered the youth. “To-day! Now! Instantly! Without delay!” He rang the changes on all the French and Italian words that could convey the idea of instant action, but without effect upon the lassitude of mind which held a spell over the boat owner. In his impatience the youth stepped forward, seized the man by the nape of the neck—he wore no collar—and by sheer force lifted him from the bench on which he was lolling and marched him to the boat.

After much bargaining,—during which the Spaniard was not too sleepy to extort two or three prices for everything suggested,—it was finally agreed that the waterman should thoroughly caulk the boat, cover her bottom

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

with pitch, and, by building a half deck, convert her forward part into a waterproof locker for provisions and other things. All this was to be done within three days, with no "to-morrows" for excuse, and then the boat, with its one mast and sail, was to become the property of the young man upon the payment of twenty-five golden guineas, five of which were paid in advance as a guarantee of good faith. It was an extortionate price for an open boat, less than twenty feet long and fit only for fishing use within a secure harbor, but the Spaniard, however little he understood of any language other than his own, quite perfectly understood that his customer wanted the boat very much and wanted it immediately.

The purchase concluded, our young gentleman, still disregarding the heat, walked briskly into the town. There he disturbed the slumbers of two or three small dealers in various wares, bought a considerable supply of such provisions as might be eaten without further cooking, a mariner's compass, some other instruments of navigation, sundry fish nets, lines, hooks and such other things as one bent upon an extended fishing excursion would be apt to need. All these articles were taken under their purchaser's personal supervision, to the

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

waterman's hut and left there until needed. So much business had not been transacted in the town for a month and so much energetic hurrying had probably never before been known there; wherefore it is safe to assume that the people whose slumbers the young Englishman had disturbed would have been astonished if astonishment had not been much too active an emotion for them to indulge in in such weather.

The town had sunk back into listless silence again, therefore, when the youth returned the second time from the boatman's house; and as he at least was in no mood for lounging or drowsing, he walked away, at a pace that suggested a wager, into the country beyond, and night was near at hand when he came back to the wretched little inn in which he had taken up his temporary abode.

The night was hot and close, as the day had been, and despite the warning the landlord had given him to beware of tropical dews, the youth insisted upon having his dinner served in the open air of the garden, under the stars and with no roof even of the frailest tropical sort to shelter him. He was much too robust a young fellow, with his six feet one of height and his hundred and seventy pounds of hardened

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

brawn, to fear the open air in any quarter of the world. He had taken no harm from the pestilential atmosphere of the Roman campaign, though he had slept many nights amid those miasms. He had been born indeed, as his father before him had been, on the coast of South Carolina, and he deemed himself by inheritance as well as by personal vigor of health, immune to all the harm that might lurk in the night air of a little seagirt Bahama island.

His host, having slept well in his chair during the afternoon, was now sufficiently awake to entertain a mildly intense feeling of disgust when the guest declined to take a bottle of sherry after his meal—for in those days men drank their wine not with their dinners but after them—and contented himself with a cigar and coffee instead.

The moon came up, round and full, and the young man still lingered in the garden, lost in meditation and cigar smoke.

About ten o'clock a stranger approached and accosted him. He was a man of about fifty, tall, lean and of dark visage, with deep set and very piercing eyes, which singularly enough were not black but a light gray. He might have been a Spaniard or a Frenchman or per-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

haps an American who had been much exposed to sun and storm. He addressed the youth politely and in English that had no trace of accent in it.

“Pardon me,” he said, “if you are at leisure I should like to talk with you for half an hour concerning matters that I think will interest you.”

“Pardon me in my turn,” replied the young man, “I do not wish to seem rude, but I cannot think there is any subject in which we are likely to be mutually interested, and—you are a stranger.”

“You are quite right,” said the older man. “It is unseemly in me to approach you in this way, but I cannot very well help myself. I recognize your right to resent the intrusion—the impertinence if you will—but I beg you to listen for a few minutes to what I have to say. You do not know me, and naturally do not care to talk to me. But I know you and I must talk to you in private, here and now. Listen and if, after hearing me, you do not pardon my presumption, I shall never repeat it.”

“I beg your pardon,” answered the youth. “I owe you an apology. I do not know you, it is true, but I ought at least to have seen that you are a gentleman, and——”

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“No,” broke in the other; “I am not a gentleman. I have no right to claim that title in any case, and least of all as a means of approach to *you*. I cannot explain. I can only ask you to let me talk to you, freely admitting that I have no claim whatever upon your attention.”

There was a melancholy earnestness in the man’s voice and countenance, and a pathetic appeal in his strange gray eyes, which fascinated his auditor. Motioning him to a seat on the opposite side of the table—for he had continued standing—the young man called for a bottle of wine, but the elder, when it came, excused himself from drinking and the glasses remained untouched to the end.

When the landlord had set the wine upon the table and departed, the stranger resumed the conversation, speaking in a low voice that could not be heard at any great distance.

“I said just now that I knew you,” he began, “and to verify that let me say that although you call yourself here by another name, and profess to be a traveling Englishman, you are really not an Englishman at all, but Mr. Roger Alton of the colony—or rather the state—of South Carolina——”

“I beg your pardon,” interrupted the young

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

man, rising, and with some resentment in his tone, "I——"

"Oh, I grant it! I grant it!" resumed the other quickly. "I don't ask you to admit the truth of any statement I make, and you need not be at the trouble to deny any. If I am wrong no harm will be done. Pray hear me out, and then decide whether you will order me from your presence or will grant my request—for I have a request to make and it is a very serious one to me. I mean no intrusion, and I certainly mean no harm to you. Let me tell you what I know and what I conjecture, and what I want. When that is done we will assume, if you wish it so, that I have been entirely mistaken and I will go away admitting my error and saying nothing to anybody."

"Oh, very well," replied the youth. "I've nothing better to do. So go on, but understand distinctly that if I say nothing in denial of your extraordinary assertions, I do not by my silence admit their truth."

"That is quite understood, sir. All I ask is that you hear me. Now I take you to be Mr. Roger Alton, the son of Col. Geoffrey Alton, of Alton House, South Carolina. You went to England seven years ago, at the age of fourteen, to be educated. You have passed

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

your summers in travel on the continent, and the rest of the time at Eton first and Oxford afterward. You have recently left the University, though you were still an undergraduate, I suppose. You did so, I think, with the purpose of returning to America and taking part in the war, on the patriot side. This last is only a conjecture on my part."

"Wonder what I should call all the rest of your singular statements then," broke in the young man with an amused smile. "But go on. I did not mean to interrupt."

"Well," resumed the other, "you probably found it difficult to secure passage from England to any American port not occupied by the British and so you came to these islands, hoping to find here some little trading craft that would take you across to the mainland. In this you have been disappointed. You have found the Bahamas pretty well cut off from communication with America, by reason of the fact that since the alliance between the Americans and the French, a French fleet has been sent to the West Indies, rendering the British tenure of these islands very insecure, and completely stopping trade relations with the American coast."

"All this is exceedingly interesting," said

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

the youth. "To me it is even amusing. So pray go on with the romance."

The other paused for half a minute as if thinking how best to present the remainder of what he had to say. Then he resumed:

"Finding all ordinary means denied you, you have decided upon a hazardous attempt to make the voyage alone in the open boat which you bought to-day. You have ordered alterations made in her, which would not have been needed or even desirable if you were only going fishing. Moreover you have laid in provisions for a much longer voyage than gentlemen usually make when they go fishing out on the bar. More significant still, you have provided yourself with instruments of navigation not needed on a fishing excursion. My conjecture is that you intend to make the pretended fishing trip a cover under which to get away from the island and out to sea without attracting the attention or arousing the suspicion of the gentlemen on those warships down there in the bay. To make the blind more effective you have engaged a quantity of bait.

"Now all this is my conjecture concerning your purpose and your plans. I freely admit that I am guilty of an impertinence in speculat-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

ing at all upon your identity or your affairs, or anything else concerning you. My excuse is that I, too, want to go to America for the purpose of taking part in the war against the British, and I should long ago have set off in an open boat if I had had the money necessary to buy one. It was in trying to arrange a trip of the sort for myself that my attention was drawn to your preparations. I have sought this conversation with no wish whatever to pry into your affairs, but solely for the purpose of inducing you to take me along with you. I have followed the sea for some years now and I am an expert navigator—though I have no captain's berth. You, I take it, know but little of navigation, so my skill may possibly be of sufficient value to you to be taken in payment for my passage. I have no money—indeed I rarely have much though I have good earning capacity. There are reasons why I must not keep what I earn. My service in sailing your boat is all that I can offer. It will be particularly valuable to you when you approach the coast, as my knowledge of the creeks, inlets and other entrances—especially on the Carolina coast—is unusually minute.”

He paused with an eager, questioning look which the moon, shining full in his face, re-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

vealed to his companion. He seemed to be trying to read the young man's countenance, to find out there what impression his words had made.

The youth sat silent for a full minute or more. Then he said:

"Let us suppose for a moment that your singular impressions concerning me and my purposes are correct. Let us suppose that I am Roger—what's his name?"

"Alton," interposed the other.

"Alton, was it? Well, let us suppose that I am Roger Alton, a young American cherishing the treasonable purpose of going home to fight against his king. What guarantee should I have in that case, that you are not a person in the employ of the British government and bent upon entrapping me to my ruin? How do I know that once aboard my boat, you will not deliver me up to be hanged to the yard arm of one of those ships out there in the bay?"

"I have thought of that difficulty," said the dark man, "and have provided a means of meeting it, which I think you will regard as adequate. Admit nothing to me now. Persist in declaring that your intention is simply to go fishing on the banks off the harbor, when your

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

boat is ready. Let me go with you. You will be fully armed of course. As we enter the boat I will hand you my pistols, and if you discover at any time anything suspicious in my conduct, you will only have to shoot me and throw my body to the sharks. They abound in these waters and their appetites are voracious. Thus I cannot possibly prove treacherous after we set sail, without paying for it with my life, and meantime, while we are waiting for the boat to be got ready, the worst that I can do will be to publish my suspicions, and, if I were so disposed, I could do that anyhow. You will have admitted nothing whatever. You are a traveling young Englishman with a mind to go a-fishing in these waters. You engage me, as an experienced seaman, to manage your boat. On shore this is the extent of our relations with each other. When we put to sea you are absolute master both of the boat and of the situation. I ask no confidences. I inquire into no secret. I ask only an engagement to go with you on your fishing trip. *On your return to this town* you can pay me a sailor's wages for my services. There can be no danger in effecting such an arrangement as that, can there?"

"No, I think not," said the youth. "At

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

any rate as I only want to go fishing, and as I shall need a sailor, I gladly engage you, if only for the sake of the laugh I shall have when we return and I pay you your wages. Meet me at the boat on Thursday morning at the flood of the tide."

With that the two separated, the elder man disappearing down the narrow street and the youth seeking his chamber on the second floor of the inn.

The night was growing chill with the dew which had begun to drip from the trees before the conversation in the garden came to an end. The young man, who seemingly had no present purpose of going to bed, carefully closed the solid wooden shutters of the unglazed windows and wrapped his cloak around him before sitting down in front of his trunk. He then proceeded to open and destroy a large packet of letters, a tedious process as it was necessary, for lack of a fireplace, to burn them one by one in the flame of a candle. He toiled at this task with exemplary patience, carefully gathering the ashes into a heap upon the little deal table.

"I must look my linen over too," he said to himself, "and burn all the pieces that have my name upon them. The loss will not be serious,

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

as I couldn't take the trunk with me at any rate."

The work of destruction, together with pauses during which the shutters were thrown open to let the smoke escape, occupied the entire night, and day was already breaking when the young man gathered the ashes into a handkerchief and quitted the room. Making his way to the pier he threw the package into the sea, after weighting it carefully with shells and rubbish to make sure of its sinking.

"Now," he said with a chuckle of relief, "I fancy it will puzzle my dark visaged friend to establish my identity if he wants to do that. I wonder what his game is, and what he is, and who? That reminds me, by the way, that I quite forgot to inquire the fellow's name. He is so much the modest gentleman in his manner that I shrank from questioning him about himself, in spite of his extraordinary impudence in prying into my private affairs. Never mind. I shall find out who he is pretty soon I suppose. He will be around the inn to-day, doubtless, and then I'll ask him, as my sailorman, who and what he is. He will give me a false name, I have no doubt, and perhaps invent an autobiography which will serve his turn for the occasion. He speaks like an educated man and

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

he evidently knows what's proper in the way of courtesy. Clearly he's a gentleman—no, by Jove, he twice distinctly declared that he was not a gentleman. Wonder what he meant by that?"

II

TWO MEN *in a* BOAT

THE man, whoever he was, did not again make his appearance at the inn, nor did the youth meet him anywhere in the little town during the days of waiting. On the morning appointed for the fishing excursion, the young man found him, clad in a sailor's working costume, standing cap in hand at the bow of the newly launched boat. After carefully examining the supplies and instruments to see that all were on board, the young man paid the remainder of the boat's purchase money to the old waterman and that worthy strolled away toward the town in search of rum, perhaps. The sailor was as deferential in his manner as any common seaman could have been toward his captain. Yet he maintained a dignity that suggested self-respect. He asked if he had not better make an inspection of the rigging and, receiving an order to that effect he rapidly but closely questioned every line and block and

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

stay, trying the pulleys to see that they ran freely, and now and then altering the rig in slight particulars. In short he "keyed up" the boat as it were, to fit her for her best performance. Finally he doffed his cap again and said:

"Everything is ready, sir, whenever you wish to step aboard."

The young man got into the boat and seated himself in the stern sheets, indicating that he intended to sail her himself, at least for the present. Then the sailorman advanced and laid his two pistols before the young captain, without a word.

The young man looked intently into his eyes for a moment and then said: "If we are to be companions in this hazardous undertaking, we must also be friends. Above all we must trust each other implicitly. Keep your pistols. I now tell you frankly that I am Roger Alton and that your conjectures concerning my purposes were correct in all essential particulars. If you know my father you know that his son cannot well be a coward. I say again, keep your pistols and give me your hand. Whoever you are, let us be friends before we start."

"Thank you," said the man, with a suggestion of threatened tears in his voice. "I

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

thank you heartily, Mr. Alton, for your generous confidence. It is like your father—whom I do not know, however.” He added the last clause hastily. “I must not let you get the impression that I am a friend of his. His friends are gentleman. I am not a gentleman.”

“You certainly seem to be one,” said Roger, as the sailor cast the boat loose and the wind caught the sail, heeling her over a trifle. “And pardon me but that reminds me that I do not know how to call you. Your name has not been mentioned between us, I think. I have not the slightest idea who or what you are.”

“I am called Thomas Humphreys, sir,” responded the man. But he did not go on to say *what* as well as *who* he was.

“Another thing,” he quickly added. “I told you I had no money, and strictly speaking I have none. That little chest sitting on the locker there has money in it, and a good deal of money too, for it is all in gold. But none of it is mine. I hold it in trust for others. Should I fall overboard or come to grief in any other way on this voyage, please open the little coffer and read some directions I have placed in it. Meantime with your permission I’ll stow it in the locker for safety.”

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

Roger Alton was sorely puzzled. Here was a man who professed to be a sailor and who confidently declared his ability to navigate a ship. But his manner and speech were those of a man bred in a very different school from that whence sailors come. The man was a puzzle in every way, and his knowledge of Roger's identity and all that pertained to him was no whit stranger than a score of other things that were observable.

Roger was a gentleman, however, if his companion was not, and he therefore repressed the impulse to ask personal questions. Nor was there time for much questioning. It was necessary to get out of the harbor without exciting suspicion on the part of the warships lying at anchor there, and to compass that it was necessary to resort to strategy. After consultation, every article about the boat that could suggest preparation for a prolonged voyage was carefully bestowed in the locker. Then sailing close in to the shore, the pair dropped anchor and began fishing. Presently they moved on, further down the bay and after one or two more feints, dropped their anchor within easy speaking distance of one of the warships. After observing them for a little while a ship's officer called out:

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“ If you want to catch anything you’d better drop down to the bar. There’s no fishing here of any account, and it’s best outside on the banks if you can make that cockle shell of yours live in the seaway out there.”

This was precisely what Roger Alton wanted. It gave him entire liberty to pass out of the harbor, and it indicated that the thought of anybody putting to sea in so frail a craft had not entered the officer’s mind even as a possibility.

“ Thank you!” cried Roger as Humphreys drew up the anchor. “ We’ll try it, and if we get back in safety I’ll stop and leave you some fish for your breakfast.”

“ That’s courteous, and the mess will be glad of the dainty,” answered the officer. “ But mind your eye if you venture beyond the bar. It’s apt to be squally in these latitudes and that shell of yours wouldn’t last long in a heavy sea.”

“ Ay, ay, sir,” shouted Humphreys in the tone of an old salt, “ that’s what the cap’n shipped me for. I’m on speakin’ terms with salt water, anyhow.”

So they hoisted sail and bore away in a fresh breeze toward the bar. There they dropped anchor again and fished for a time. Then they

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

shifted their position, going half a mile farther seawards. Later still they set sail and trolled back and forth as if for surface-swimming fish, going every time farther and farther from the ships. They continued this until nightfall, which, in latitudes so low, occurs almost immediately after sunset, and with next to no intervening twilight.

“May we not start now?” asked Roger, as the ships faded away in the gathering gloom. “They can’t see us and clearly they don’t suspect our purpose.”

“You are master of the boat, sir,” answered the sailor.

“Very well then, we’ll put to sea at once.” And with that he brought the boat about and laid her course to the northwest, while Humphreys lighted the little firefly lamp in the binnacle that made the compass card dimly visible.

The sky had become overcast with the coming on of evening and the darkness was intense, for the voyagers carried no lights.

“In the eyes of the law, we’re pirates I suppose,” said Roger. “We have put to sea without clearance papers, and are sailing under no country’s flag.”

“Perhaps,” answered Humphreys. “The

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

boat is too small I think to require registry, but as she is sailing from one country to another I suppose we should be asked for our papers if we were overhauled or if we put into a recognized port. However all the smugglers of the smaller sort, take the same risk."

Then in answer to Roger's questioning, he explained that there had been for many years a constant illicit trade between the West Indies and other countries and the Carolina coast.

"You see our coast—I should say the Carolina coast—is laced all over with little creeks, rivers and inlets that no revenue fleet in the world could adequately guard. They are narrow, crooked, and often run into each other, while most of them are very deep. I know some that are thirty feet deep even where they are not more than thirty feet wide. Their banks are generally dense woodlands, so that when a smuggling craft makes its way into one of them it is out of sight at the first turn of the creek, and its cargo can be put ashore anywhere."

"But how about disposing of the goods without detection?" asked Roger.

"Oh, that's easy enough. The British shipping laws and trade exactions are so oppressive that very few of the colonists have ever felt

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

much compunction in buying smuggled goods. In New England smuggling for years amounted almost to a regular commerce. There was far less of it in the Southern colonies, but still there was a good deal and it was easily managed. The British law prohibited the importation of tea into the colonies from any country but England, but a good deal of the tea used in Carolina before independence was declared, was bought for less money than it would have cost in England. But the smuggling has been mostly outward bound. There are better markets than England affords for cotton, indigo and tobacco, and as the British law prohibited the shipment of such goods to any but British ports, why, naturally the smugglers had not much difficulty in finding outbound cargoes." *

* About 1750, in an official report, the Royal Governor Glen said to the Lords Commissioners in England: "There is no country in the world where there is less illegal trade, at least so far as I can learn." Perhaps Gov. Glen did not "learn" quite all that some others knew on this subject. He added: "If there were any it would be difficult to prevent by reason of the great numbers of rivers and creeks and the small number of officers of the revenue." Tradition tells us that during the quarter of a century after Gov. Glen made his report, the smugglers more and more availed themselves of the geographical advantages to which he had directed their attention.—*Author.*

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

Roger was not listening. He had relinquished the helm to Humphreys, and taken his station in the bow, forward of the mast. He was excited. He neither saw nor heard, but sat silent, as a supremely angry or a desperately determined man might. He had planned this voyage with a frequently sinking heart, in ignorance of what might or might not be the restrictions imposed upon persons leaving the island, an ignorance all the more tormenting because he dared not remove it by inquiry of any sort. From the beginning he had been painfully apprehensive that at the last moment his flight would in some way be stopped and all his hopes brought to naught. Now at last he was free. He was out on a wilderness of waves, in a frail open boat, it was true, but there was now no official arm to restrain him and nothing more unfriendly than the surging waters of the Gulf Stream between him and his native land in whose behalf he was hastening to take up arms. The release from the long tension was more than he could bear and he sat there dumb in the bow of the boat, while every pulse throbbed painfully with suppressed emotion.

An hour passed and a ship's light appeared immediately ahead. Suddenly the thought

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

came to Roger's half-dazed mind that his companion had proved treacherous after all and instead of putting to sea had sailed again into the harbor and was now approaching the warships at anchor there. He sprang to his feet and turned savagely upon the helmsman.

"What light is that, sir?" he cried.

"Stand off, sir," called Humphreys. "Let her come round or that ship will run us down in five seconds." With that he "gibed" the boom, bringing the boat about with a suddenness that wellnigh overturned her, Roger dodging the swinging boom just in time to save himself from being knocked overboard. When the boat righted herself she was half full of water.

"I beg your pardon, Captain," the man resumed when the danger was past. "But I was depending upon you to call lights. I can't see them very well here abaft the sail. Still, it was my business to see that ship's lights. She was bearing right down upon us. You see as we carry no light we must look out for ourselves."

Roger was heartily ashamed of having doubted his companion, and he gave vent to his emotion by grasping his friend's hand and saying:

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“ I know I ought to have called the light, but I think I’ve been half beside myself since we cleared the harbor. I have slept scarcely an hour for a week past, and what with that and the release of the strain, my nerves gave way I think. I’m all right now, and I’ll not be careless again.”

“ I saw you were excited,” responded Humphreys. “ Otherwise I should have asked you sooner about our course and destination. We’ll talk it over if you please, as soon as I bail this water out. If you’ll take the helm and hold her as she is for half an hour, I’ll have her dry again.”

“ No,” said Roger, “ I’m to blame for that water and I’ll bail it out,” and with that he began work vigorously, finding in active exertion a much-needed relief for his over-strained nerves.

When the boat was free of water Roger sat down by the mast and said:

“ I’m quite myself again now, and ready to hear what you have to suggest as to our course. I suppose it is hardly necessary however for me to discuss the matter. You know the way to Charles Town better than I do, and that’s where we’re bound.”

“ Very well, sir, if you say so.”

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

"I don't catch your drift," said Roger inquiringly. "Of what were you thinking?"

"Only that Charles Town is probably in the hands of the British just now."

"What! Charles Town? When did you hear?"

"I have heard nothing definite," answered Humphreys; "but there was a rumor ashore that an expedition has been sent from New York to the South lately and that Savannah was captured some time last month. Those sleepy islanders may have dreamed the whole thing, but it is worth while to take all precautions."

"Certainly. It would be a melancholy ending of our voyage to find ourselves captives and forced to choose between British protection and a British prison. What's your idea?"

"Well if they have taken Savannah it gives them a base of operations, and that is what they have taken it for. They mean to overrun Georgia and the Carolinas, and I should think their first point of attack after Savannah would be Charles Town. It seems likely therefore that if they have really taken Savannah, they are by this time either in Charles Town or closely besieging it by land and sea. In either case

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

that harbor isn't a desirable one for us to make."

"Can we not make for Georgetown then?"

"It seems an unnecessary risk. We should have to make a run of six or seven hundred miles in all, and every additional mile brings additional danger. We're not afraid of death, of course, else we shouldn't be out here in a boat that is hardly fit for navigating a creek; but we don't want to fail, and the longer our voyage is, the greater is our chance of failure."

"What do you advise?" asked Roger.

"We've three or four courses open to us," said Humphreys, who had evidently thought the problem out in his own mind. "From here to the Florida coast the distance is small—not more than a hundred and fifty miles, or perhaps less. We might sail west, therefore, and reach land by the day after to-morrow, but we should then be about as far from our destination in South Carolina as we are now, and a British army would probably occupy the country we'd have to travel through. My notion is that we'd better take advantage of the Gulf Stream, and sail northward till we reach the latitude of Savannah, then make west till we sight the coast. After that we can lay to till night and then run up the coast and into some

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

inlet or other. If we can get into some little stream like the Ashepoo, the Edisto, the Comabee, the Stono, the Coosawhatchie or the Pocotaligo, we shall be safe even if the whole country is overrun. We can stay in the woods till we learn the position of affairs and how to make our way up country. There's always plenty of game and fish to eat along such creeks."

"But how are we to find an entrance—particularly at night?"

"I think I can manage that," said Humphreys with a note of confidence in his voice.

"You know the coast well, then," said Roger. "Your home is there perhaps."

"I have no home," said the other. "But I do know the coast. As a seaman it is my business to know something of all coasts in this quarter of the world, and besides I have had particular occasion to learn a good deal about that of the Carolinas."

"Let us sail for the Gulf Stream then," said Roger.

"We're in it now, sir, and its current adds several miles an hour to our sailing speed. If the weather holds good and this wind lasts we ought to make port in a week. But the weather may not hold and if it should come on to

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

blow even a moderate gale, it will take both of us night and day to handle the boat. So you'd better get some sleep on the half deck while you can. I'm fresh, and I'm good for this night easily. You must have some sleep, or you'll not be fit for work in case of a storm."

The soundness of this view was so clearly manifest that Roger accepted it without demur. He was soon sleeping soundly on the little half deck with his head resting upon the gunwale. The boat sped on through the waves as he slept, carrying him every moment nearer to the home land he had left seven years before.

III

IN *which* ROGER ALTON *encounters an* EMBARRASSMENT

IT was a night of storm and heavy seas on which the two voyagers at last approached the coast. They had sighted Hilton Head early in the morning and all day had run up the coast with the wind blowing hard almost abeam. At ten o'clock at night, with a black pall of cloud overhead, the wind blowing directly on shore, the inky coast line within sight, in spite of the darkness, and the line of breakers so near on the boat's lee that their roar made the hearing of speech almost impossible, Humphreys calmly sat at the helm and held his course northward. It was a perilous thing to run so close to the breakers, and on the part of one less familiar with the coast than Humphreys was it would have been an inexcusably reckless thing to do.

"I know this breaker line so well," he explained to his companion, "that I can afford to take risks, and I'm hugging it as close as

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

possible in order to make out the coast. You see I've got to know exactly where I am, and the night is so dark that I can't make out even the coast line at any considerable distance. There! I know where we are now"—staring out into the blackness that to Roger's eyes was wholly featureless. "Can you take the helm now and hold her steady in this sea? I'll take the lookout forward and see if we can't slip into some inlet. It's so dark that I can hardly make out the landmarks while bending over this binnacle lamp. Dim as it is it spoils my eyes for seeing in the dark."

Roger went to the helm and Humphreys took his stand on the locker top, clinging to the mast for support as the little craft bobbed about like a cork upon the surging sea. From time to time he called out directions to Roger for slight changes in the course. Meantime the gale steadily increased in fury until it seemed scarcely possible for the boat to weather it longer. Twice she shipped seas that wellnigh swamped her, but the only heed Humphreys gave was expressed in a steering direction, given without a sign of excitement, though in a voice loud enough to be heard above the howling of the tempest.

"Port a little, sir—steady—starboard—that

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

will do—try and hold her so.” Somehow these slight changes in their course seemed so well timed as to afford all needed relief, and although Roger’s feet were well under water, no more billows broke over the gunwale after Humphreys began directing the course with reference to that danger.

After running thus for an hour perhaps, Humphreys suddenly cried out, with the first note of excitement that had sounded in his voice:

“Hard a starboard, sir—hard a starboard! Bring her around quick! Never mind the sea! She’ll stand it.” Then as the boat came round, head on to the black shore line, he shouted: “Let out the sheet! Let her run free! Give her every stitch of canvas straight before the wind, and hold her so!”

Roger supposed that for some reason Humphreys had decided to beach the boat, and was trying, by showing all sail and running head on toward land, to send her as far as possible through the surf and up on the sand reaches. The young man quivered with excitement over the desperate chance, expecting with each moment to feel the deadly thump of the sand bars upon the keel of the boat. But the little craft forged on toward the line of trees,

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

now plainly visible, great waves breaking over her stern now and then, with the threat of swamping her.

“Ease her up a little, sir, and port a little,” cried the man in a voice now cold and emotionless, as he quitted his post and stepped down from the half deck, with the air of one whose difficult task is done.

As he did so, to Roger’s astonishment, the boat glided into still water overhung with trees. She seemed to him to have cleft a niche for herself in the rigid and threatening coast line. In fact she had been dexterously sailed into the mouth of a little stream which Humphreys had seen clearly enough though his companion had not been able to discern the smallest suggestion of a break in the frowning front of the coast.

“Where are we?” he asked eagerly as the boat drifted upon the smooth land-locked inlet, and Humphreys set himself at work to relieve her of the water she had shipped in the perilous run ashore.

“We are in the mouth of a little creek that runs into or out of the mouth of a sound,” answered the other. “In fact, it runs both ways—sometimes one way and sometimes the other—according to the tide.”

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“How on earth did you find it in the blackness of such a night?”

“I was here five years ago on just such a night, and I remembered the look of the coast pretty well. I was running out then, and looking back. I had reason to look earnestly and to fasten the scene upon my memory. Besides, I’ve been about here many times since. We’ve been inside the sound’s mouth for some little time but it is as rough as the sea outside, with the storm beating straight into it, so I hunted for the creek as a harbor. We must work up the inlet a little way and camp for the night. In the morning you can find out the situation of affairs, so that you may know what to do. There’s a plantation house up here a little way, where you can make inquiries.”

Roger could not help observing that the man said “you” and not “we,” but he said nothing. Instead, he joined his companion in the toilsome task of rowing the boat up the stream with the two clumsy oars that were a part of her equipment. Towards morning, at Humphreys’s suggestion, they halted and tied up their craft in a part of the creek which was completely screened from observation by a dense forest growth and a denser thicket of cane and vine in the surrounding swamp lands.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

Humphreys stretched himself upon the little deck, as soon as the boat was made fast, but Roger, with his young man's enthusiasm, declared his purpose to sleep that night upon the soil of his native land, and, leaping ashore, he lay down upon the ground, wrapped only in his cloak, and sank at once into the slumber of a healthy man thoroughly exhausted with strenuous exertion and still more strenuous anxiety, long continued but now at an end.

When he waked he found Humphreys busy over a fire which he had kindled not far away. The man had killed and dressed two squirrels and was now broiling them for breakfast.

"Isn't it a trifle dangerous to kindle a fire here?" asked Roger. "The country may be full of British soldiers for aught we know to the contrary."

"No," replied Humphreys; "they could have no possible object in coming away down here to the sea where there is no enemy to encounter, and no position to defend. You may depend upon it that there are no military forces within twenty or thirty miles of us at the nearest, even if they have marched upon Charles Town and are holding the low country. And besides it is fully three miles to the nearest edge of these woods. The only house near—and

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

that is four miles up the creek—is the widow Vargave's. She owns the plantation to which these woods belong. After breakfast you can go to her house if you will and find out what the situation is. She is a patriot, you may be sure, and she knows your father well."

"Do you mean Mrs. William Vargave?" asked Roger.

"Yes, she owns the land we are camping upon."

"Oh! well, I knew her intimately, when I was a boy. But you called her a widow. Is Mr. Vargave dead?"

"He is supposed to have been drowned out there in the mouth of the sound five years ago. His body was never recovered, I believe."

"Do you know Mrs. Vargave?"

"No, oh no," answered the other quickly. "I have no acquaintances in South Carolina."

"I'll introduce you then," said Roger. "She will welcome any gentleman whom I introduce as my friend."

"You forget," said the man moodily. "I am not a gentleman, and the agreement between you and me to be friends was limited to our voyage together. I shall certainly cherish feelings of friendship towards you so long as I live, but I am not the sort of man whom you

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

should call friend. Above all I cannot permit you to introduce me to any of your friends. That reminds me that I have a very earnest request to make of you. After you return from Mrs. Vargave's house with the information needed you and I must part company. I beg of you, if it is possible, to forget that you ever knew me at all. Pray say as little as may be in any event about the unknown sailor who voyaged with you from the Bahamas. If you ever meet me again—as you easily may during the war, for we have both come to Carolina to fight—please let our meeting be that of absolute strangers. If anybody introduces us to each other, as somebody may,—very well, you can safely know me after that. But I beg of you, say nothing of any previous acquaintance between us.”

“But my dear friend——” began Roger protestingly.

“I know,” interrupted Humphreys, “all this seems unnatural and ungrateful in me, but I cannot help myself. Neither can I explain. In making my requests I am terribly in earnest and if you refuse to grant them you will do me a much sharper hurt than you imagine. You will in that case compel me to quit Carolina again, even if I have to put to sea astride of a

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

log. Will you not promise what I ask, in memory of the dangers we have shared together?"

"Yes. In the memory of those dangers and of the faithfulness of your friendship, I promise what you ask, though I cannot understand why you ask it," said Roger, grasping the man's hand. "Whatever else you may or may not be, you have been to me a faithful comrade under circumstances that ought to bind any two men together. I respect your desire for secrecy concerning yourself. If we meet, we meet as strangers and any subsequent acquaintance between us will date from that hour."

"Thank you from the bottom of my heart!" responded Humphreys with a warm hand-grasp.

Breakfast over Roger set out to visit Mrs. Vargave, having received from Humphreys minute directions as to the way.

It was one of those brilliantly sunlit, all-vivifying mornings which are of almost daily occurrence on that sub-tropical coast in January and February, but which people farther north are glad to welcome as occasional visitors in June. A young man afoot on such a morning could hardly fail to be happy, and when we remember that to other causes of rejoicing there was added the circumstance that this young

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

man had just landed from a perilous voyage, and was again on his native shores after so long an absence, there is no occasion to wonder that his step was light and his spirits buoyant, in spite of his weariness from the prolonged struggle with the sea.

But he fell a-thinking, as he trudged onward through the woodlands. His friend of the boat was an enigma that troubled him. The man was and was not what he professed to be. Obviously he was a sailor. So much he had proved by his masterly handling of the boat. But who ever heard a sailor talk as he did? His manner was that of a man bred in good social surroundings, yet he had taken pains to declare several times that he was not a gentleman. He knew this coast with wonderful minuteness and accuracy; he had even described to Roger the windings and the features of the woodland footpath he was now following; and yet he had distinctly denied that he lived in the Carolinas, and declared that he had no acquaintances in the state.

It was exceedingly annoying to have conjecture baffled in this way, but that was the least disagreeable part of the matter. For as he meditated upon the singular case an explanation of the mystery occurred to young Alton,

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

an explanation which seemed sufficiently to account for all the puzzling circumstances of the case. That explanation supposed a fact which the young man found it very disagreeable to contemplate. *The man must have been a pirate.* Piracy in a small way was common enough in those days, especially in the seas which had cast this man upon Roger's acquaintance. He might have been once a gentleman somewhere, which would account for his speech and manner. If he had been a pirate that fact would account for his seamanship and for his extraordinary familiarity with details concerning this coast, on which he might have had frequent occasion to take refuge for purposes of concealment. Yet if this assumption was correct why was the man now risking his neck by boldly returning to the Carolinas to enter the active military service? Surely, one who knew the country so well would be recognized by some one, and piracy is an offence never forgotten or forgiven.

Then Roger remembered the queer little chest of gold. Where did that come from? Why had the man with evident dejection and humiliation protested that it did not belong to him—that he held it in trust for others and had no right to use it as his own? Late coming

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

prickings of conscience might perhaps have taught him this with respect to ill-gotten gains, and he might now be bent upon devoting both the money and his life to the cause of American independence as a sort of atonement for years of crime. And his extraordinary earnestness in pledging Roger to silence as to their association! He feared, doubtless, that he might be brought to justice after awhile and was generously anxious to save Roger from sharing his disgrace and punishment by concealing the fact that they had made a technically piratical voyage together, without clearance papers, slipping out of a port without notice to the authorities, and landing surreptitiously where there was no port at all.

All these suggestions pressed themselves upon the young man's mind and troubled him sorely, for he had conceived a very strong liking for the man who had shared the dangers of his voyage and brought him safely home again. It troubled him mightily to think ill of so tried a friend; but when this theory of the man's history had once suggested itself, there seemed to him no escape from its extreme probability. All that he knew of Humphreys seemed to point directly to this conclusion. Every circumstance tended to confirm the suspicion.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

Every act and attitude of the man was consonant with this theory and with no other that Roger could frame. The young man tried hard to dismiss his suspicions and retain his faith in his friend, but without success.

When he reached the Vargave house he found it a substantial brick structure, almost square, with a broad veranda running all the way around it, after a style that still obtains somewhat in that region because of the need of shade. There was a broad passageway, or hall running through the house from front to rear, with great double doors—now thrown wide open—at either end. Roger had never seen this house, which, with the surrounding plantation, had come to Mrs. Vargave's daughter by inheritance since his departure from the country. It bore no marks of wealth, but there was about it a delightful atmosphere of comfortable repose. An avenue of live oaks, festooned with long gray moss, led up to the outer gate, while within the small house-grounds the surface was covered thick with flowering shrubbery, which in that region, where lawns cannot grow, is a necessary sanitary protection of the soil from the sun.

Roger walked between the two beds of cape jessamine which bounded the immediate ap-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

proach, and, crossing the broad piazza, was met at the door, as he afterwards expressed it, by an "embarrassment," which put his wits to flight on the instant. This "embarrassment" was in fact a radiantly beautiful young woman, who happened to be crossing the hallway just as Mr. Alton reached the front door. She was engaged in putting the finishing touches to the morning's housework, and held a broad straw hat, filled with a disordered array of flowers, in both her hands. Her hair had "come down" during her stay in the garden, and now hung loosely over her shoulders in great, irregular brown masses, with a glint of burnished copper in their waves. In short the young woman was charmingly "unpresentable" as to her toilet, wearing as she did a girlish bib apron over her white morning gown. When, with a snatch of song on her lips, she suddenly found herself confronted by a good-looking young man whose knee breeches, brass-buttoned blue coat and jaunty cocked hat—for Roger had dressed himself in his best before leaving the boat—marked him at once as a "fine gentleman," she paused in picturesque embarrassment.

Now Roger Alton had seen many pretty girls, of many types in many lands. He had

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

been carefully instructed from his youth up in the high art of bowing low and yet keeping the blood out of his neck and forehead. But his education failed him lamentably at the very moment of sharpest need. He bowed, it is true, but awkwardly and with a stare, and he blushed scandalously.

The young woman was the first to recover her self-possession. Young women always are first to do that upon such occasions. With an amused smile she swept a stately courtesy, and greeted the guest with a cordial "good morning, sir."

With many a stammer and a wholly unreasonable amount of blood in his face, Roger managed at last to announce himself.

"I am Roger Alton, and I have taken the liberty of calling to see Mrs. Vargave."

"And I, sir, am Helen Vargave. I am very glad to see you, Mr. Alton, and mamma will be delighted, I am sure. We had not heard of your return to America."

With that she ushered the guest into the drawing-room, holding his hand in hers, and rang for a maid to announce his arrival to her mother. Then, as if suddenly remembering her disordered appearance—she had probably been conscious of it all the while—she said:



"I am Roger Alton."

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“ I hope you do not remember me, Mr. Alton, else you'll think me incorrigible. When you knew me I was a wild, half-savage creature, chiefly remarkable for a prejudice I cherished against wearing my bonnet, and tying my shoes or submitting my hair to the restraints of civilization. Excuse me for five minutes and I'll try to prove my reformation.”

As she said this, Roger glanced at a pretty little slipped foot which was just peeping out from beneath her gown, and recovering his gallantry with his self-possession, said:

“ I'm sure I see nothing which I do not admire about the shoes or the hair just now, and I do remember very distinctly——”

But the elusive young woman had already courtesied herself out of the room—true to the instinct of a daughter of Eve, to put her fig leaves in proper array for masculine inspection.

Mr. Roger Alton presently began doubting the actuality of the vision he had seen. I am wholly unable to explain his incredulity, as there was certainly nothing at war with nature's order in the fact that the little girl of seven or eight years ago was a grown young woman now. But Roger was for the moment unable to believe his senses, and before he had done speculating upon the possibility that he

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

might be in a dream, Mrs. Vargave appeared and greeted him cordially.

While he was explaining to her the suddenness of his arrival and the manner of his coming, Mistress Helen returned, announcing herself as "dressed and in her right mind."

"Mr. Alton caught me in shocking disorder, mamma," she said. "I really believe he was frightened. He could scarcely speak at all."

"Say I was stunned, rather," he replied, "and then pray tell me why it is that comely young women always run out of sight when anybody finds them really at their best in the way of appearance? In trying to hide your beautiful hair in a knot behind your head, and laying off your becoming apron, you have done all you could to spoil the exquisite picture I saw framed in the doorway a little while ago. It is no thanks to you that you could not quite accomplish that fell purpose. Nature was arrayed against your rebellious will."

As Mr. Roger delivered this speech he looked at the fair girl with a degree of admiration which showed plainly enough that even combs and conventionalities had not greatly marred the comeliness that had so lately startled his gaze.

The girl coquettishly arose and courtesied

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

profoundly, with a laughing mock dignity which impressed him as exceedingly charming.

Presently Roger remembered his mission and asked concerning the state of public affairs. He learned that the British had indeed taken Savannah, and were overrunning Georgia, but that as yet they had not crossed the Savannah River into South Carolina. The impression was general, however, Mrs. Vargave said, that the South was hereafter to bear the brunt of the conflict. The enemy had practically failed at the North, the country there remaining unconquered, even when all the principal cities were occupied by the British. The capture of Savannah had already given impudent courage to the tories at the South. It was apparently the British purpose after overrunning Georgia, to advance into Carolina, seize Charles Town, and, leaving a small force of regulars with the tories to keep the patriots in subjection, to push on northward to the conquest of Virginia. That accomplished, the northern states could be attacked in the rear.

“The saddest part of it all, and the most dangerous one,” said the little gentlewoman, “is that there are so many tories among us, and so many more of our people whose concern for

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

their property and prosperity, will prompt them to become tories the moment the British seem to be masters here."

"Yes, the cowards!" broke in the girl, with an intensity of feeling that the well-bred and carefully self-restrained young women of that day never permitted themselves to manifest except under extraordinary stress of emotion.

Roger looked at her with a new admiration. Here, he thought, is a beautiful young woman who has something in her that it is better worth a man's while to love than mere beauty, however radiant that may be. With the stately manners of the time, he arose and bowed low, saying,—

"I applaud your sentiment Mistress Helen, and I share it to the utmost. A tory who is such upon conviction, may perhaps be respected; but a tory who betrays his country and his neighbors for the sake of personal advantage is despicable beyond the toleration of any honest mind. But as you say, Madam," turning again to Mrs. Vargave, "our worst difficulty lies in the existence of a tory sentiment, and the cruellest feature of the war here will be the conflict between neighbors who were once friends, with all of treachery and distrust and hatred that such a struggle must breed among

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

the people. It will convert an armed conflict between the soldiers of two nations into that cruellest of all things a civil war. It will array neighbor against neighbor. It will bring the torch into use where there ought to be nothing but legitimate arms employed. It will substitute malice for soldierly devotion to duty and it will give malice abundant opportunity to wreak its revenges in ways that Mistress Helen properly calls cowardly."

"Pray when did I become 'Mistress Helen' to you, sir? You used to put no handle to my name in the old days when I used to spend delightful weeks at Alton House and the big boy Roger made flutter mills and miniature boats for the little girl's amusement. Your stay abroad has grievously marred your manners sir, I think."

"Yes, I remember. But in those days the little girl used to pay for the boats and reward the making of the flutter mills by throwing her arms about the big boy's neck and——"

"Oh, never mind the details," broke in the girl. "We can't quite renew the past, but please call me just Helen. I shall not feel that it is really you if you don't."

"Very well, Helen, if you'll call me just Roger as you used to do."

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“ Oh but you’re going into the army and you’re sure to become a major or something, and then——”

“ And then? ”

Obviously she didn’t know what then. So she changed the conversation, but after that it was “ just Helen ” and “ just Roger ” between these two playmates of the long gone past. This was a dangerous beginning of renewed comradeship perhaps. But young people are apt to be reckless of danger in such cases.

Having learned that the Georgia country south and west of the Savannah River was the present scene of nominal military operations, and that there was no fighting in immediate prospect, Roger saw his way clear to pass some time at his home, sixty or eighty miles distant, before taking the field. And as he had discovered, since meeting Helen Vargave, that he was excessively weary after his voyage, he was easily persuaded to remain at the Vargaves’, as a camp of repose, for a week or ten days at least, before proceeding to Alton House.

“ I will send a servant down the creek,” said Mrs. Vargave, “ to bring your boat up opposite the house and remove your luggage, if you will oblige me by ringing the bell, Roger.”

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“ Pardon me,” replied Roger, remembering Humphreys and his dread of discovery, “ but it will be necessary for me to go down there first. I have a queer sailor there, who is waiting for his dismissal, and if I may have a horse I’ll ride down and see him. The servants can bring the boat up later in the day and as for my luggage, it is anything but extensive I assure you. My trunk, I suppose, has been appropriated by this time by my late landlord in the Bahamas. He will cherish my linen doubtless as a souvenir of his unfortunate guest who went fishing one day and never came back. He will think of me as drowned, and say ‘ poor fellow,’ in Spanish, and put on my shirts with rejoicing that I paid my score before starting upon the fatal excursion.”

Half an hour later Roger was galloping along the bank of the creek toward the boat’s mooring place. When he reached the spot, Humphreys was nowhere to be seen, and after calling him twice or thrice, Roger began inspecting the boat. Every article belonging to himself was in its place, but all his companion’s belongings were gone, including of course the queer little money chest. The man had disappeared utterly, leaving no trace behind, and Roger, giving up the search, proceeded to in-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

spect a pair of pistols and a rifle which he had bought in England. That species of weapon, the rifle, was not very common in those days, especially rifles like this one with its grooves winding spirally around the bore. Roger had been captivated with the gun because of its deadly accuracy of aim and its unusually long range, and he had bought it at an extortionate price, for use in his coming campaigns.

The salt water had rusted the piece somewhat, and while rubbing it with a bit of sail cloth, Roger opened the little chamber in the breech designed to hold grease and spare flints. He found there a scrap of paper—a fragment apparently of an old letter sheet, on which Humphreys, with a pencil of actual lead—for plumbago pencils such as we now use were then unknown—had traced some sentences in printing letters, as if to disguise his handwriting. The note was in these words:

“I find it necessary to leave before you return. You will find all your things in the locker. If you will rip up the false flooring of the boat you will find the bilge filled with bars of lead. I put the metal there without your knowledge, during the night before we sailed, partly to serve as necessary ballast, and partly because I knew how useful it would be for bul-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

lets. I said nothing to you about it, because its importation was in fact a smuggling of contraband goods, or would have been so regarded if we had fallen into the hands of British authorities. I did not want you to share the responsibility of such an operation. Farewell. Remember your promise. If we meet again we do not know each other. If we meet no more God bless you! I shall place this paper where you are sure to find it when you return to the boat."

To this there was no name signed. Roger placed it in his pocket, and tore up a strip of the boat's false flooring. There he found the lead, closely packed and securely held in place by the strongly-fastened floor boards. He estimated its weight at about four hundred pounds, and rejoiced in the opportunity of making so valuable a contribution to the patriot cause.

"Poor Humphreys!" he thought. "How and where did he get it all? He had no money with which to buy it, unless perhaps he spent the last of his scant supply in this purchase, leaving himself penniless. Wonder how he will manage to travel inland without a copper in his pockets? Well, at any rate he is a man of fertile resource, and he'll take care of himself, doubtless."

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

With that, Roger remounted and rode away, his pistols in his belt and his rifle over his shoulder.

IV

IN *which* DESTINY *takes the* HELM

NOW that all the difficulties of his home coming were surmounted and he was actually in Carolina again, Roger had time to reflect a little upon what he had done. He had quitted the University and come home without obtaining his father's consent or even asking for it, and in those stately old days young men were expected to show the profoundest deference to their fathers. It is true that Roger was now a man of full age, legally free to do as he pleased, but it was certainly not his pleasure or purpose to offend his father and least of all to wound him, by any seeming of disrespect. Now that he thought the matter over calmly he felt a deal of doubt as to how his father would receive the news of what he might easily regard as unwarranted disobedience.

Roger held his father in exceedingly tender affection, and the thought of wounding him

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

was very distressing to the young man. It was all the more to Roger's credit that he felt thus so keenly, inasmuch as he was in no material way dependent upon his father. He had inherited from an uncle a comfortable fortune of his own, and during his seven years' absence from home his property had grown greatly in value under the energetic and judicious management of his sister Jacqueline. For not even Mrs. Pinckney, who introduced indigo culture into Carolina, and who, as Eliza Lucas at the age of sixteen, managed three plantations with conspicuous success—was a better woman of business than Roger Alton's twin sister Jacqueline. But the young man would far rather have sacrificed his fortune than suffer the least estrangement from his father.

It was with anxious care, therefore, that he prepared a letter to be sent by a servant to Alton House announcing his arrival and asking for his father's commands. The missive was couched in stately phrases, as was customary at a time when even young women writing to their most intimate girl friends, subscribed their missives: "Your most obedient, humble servant" and signed their names in full. Roger's letter read:

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“ LONSDALE, Feb. 3, 1779.

“ HONORED SIR:

“ I have the duty of announcing to you my return to America.

“ I gravely fear that in taking the course I have, without first securing your approval, I may seem to you to have been somewhat wanting in that respect which I have ever cherished and shall cherish till my dying day for a father who has so greatly honored the name I am proud to have inherited. Believe me, I have intended no failure in affection or duty.

“ When I came of full age, and realized the dangers to which my country was exposed; when I reflected upon the hardships and privations which thousands of my countrymen were willingly enduring in assertion of our independence; and especially when I remembered the honorable wounds you received in earlier wars for the defence of Carolina, wounds that still pain and enfeeble you; when I meditated upon all these things the conviction forced itself upon me that the time had come for me to take up the duty of representing the house of Alton and preserving the Alton name in that honor which your courage and devotion to duty had won for it. I could not rest in England—which is now the enemy’s country—while a foreign foe was overrunning my native land and threatening to rob all of us of our birthright as free men. In brief, my father, I had a duty to do which I felt that I could neither neglect nor postpone without proving myself unworthy of the heritage of honor to which, thanks to you, sir, I was born.

“ It would have taken months, to communicate with you and receive your reply, if indeed it were possible to communicate with you at all in these troubled times. And let me be honest enough to say that my sense of duty would have impelled me to return and bear my share in my country’s defence even had you forbidden

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

me to do so. It would have grieved me deeply to disobey you, but I must have done my duty even at such a cost. One's manhood is the one thing of supreme worth in this world.

"I spare you the details of my journey until such time as I shall be permitted to relate them in person. It is sufficient now to say that I crossed from the Bahamas in an open boat, and although the eight or ten days' voyage was a very boisterous one, a skillful sailor whom I had in my service, managed to make a landing on the night before last, on the lower edge of Mrs. Vargave's plantation of Lonsdale.

"Finding that no active operations are just now in progress, and that the enemy has not yet invaded our state, I have accepted Mrs. Vargave's hospitable invitation to rest here from the fatigues of my voyage while awaiting your commands in reply to this letter, which will leave here to-morrow by the hands of a servant and should reach you within three or four days' time.

"Pray oblige me by presenting my messages of devoted affection to Jacqueline, and believe me, honored sir,

"Your most obedient, humble servant and son,

"ROGER ALTON.

"To COL. GEOFFREY ALTON,

"Alton House."

This duty done, Roger had nothing to do but wait for the answer to his letter. So uncertain was he of his father's probable attitude that the waiting would have been a very anxious one but for the alleviating circumstance that it was endured in the company and with the sympathetic assistance of Helen Vargave.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

There was no company at Lonsdale, during Roger's stay. Mrs. Vargave rarely went beyond the veranda, as she was by no means robust, while to those two healthy young people—Helen Vargave and Roger Alton—the great out of doors seemed the only possible place in which to breathe with any comfort. This was rather curious, inasmuch as the house was provided lavishly with large windows that were always wide open by day, and the veranda, twenty feet in width, always had a breeze sweeping through some one or more of its four long reaches. Yet as I have said, our two young people found existence impossible there, by daylight at least, and so, after the morning's joint labors in cutting flowers in the garden, these two would wander away on foot or horseback, no one knew whither, returning only when the sun grew fervent toward noonday. When it declined in the afternoon and seemed more gently disposed, they would again weary of the house and sally forth in search of larger supplies of air.

They enjoyed most of all their early morning rides on horseback. After the excellent fashion of the young women of the South, Helen was always below stairs as soon as the dawn broadened into day. Had she not the

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

maids to direct in their work? And was it not necessary for her to "give out" the raw materials for the breakfast she had planned over night? But was there any real need for the services of Mr. Roger in connection with these purely feminine occupations? If not, why was it that he, too, although he had for years been accustomed to a late rising hour, found it impossible, there at Lonsdale, to sleep a wink after six o'clock in the morning? Why was it that about that hour every morning he descended the stairs, fresh from his invigorating cold bath, and had the good fortune always to find Helen in the great hallway, or just coming into it from the breakfast parlor? He attributed his new-born love of early rising to the glorious climate of the Carolina coast where February fairly puts the Northern June and the English May to shame. Perhaps that was it. It would not be becoming in me to question the accuracy of any statement made by a man who was accustomed all his life to resent imputations of that sort in ways that involved bodily peril to the offender.

However that may be, it is certain that at Lonsdale Roger Alton formed that habit of very early rising which clung to him always afterwards. And being up, and knowing that

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

the tradition of the family, sternly supported by the unyielding will of an ultra-conservative negro cook, forbade the service of breakfast before the hour of nine, what was more natural than that these two energetic young people should mount their horses and gallop away to see how the fields and the woodlands looked after their night's bath of dew, and to watch the white mists arise from the marshes? Sometimes they galloped, just to give the mettlesome horses a share in their enjoyment. Sometimes they curbed their steeds down to a walk. That happened when the conversation grew earnest for awhile.

How good, and wholesome it was and how completely in accord with Mother Nature's intent! And how inevitable was the outcome of it all, especially since these two had resumed their childhood's practice of being just "Roger" and "Helen" to each other!

One afternoon, the wind being fair, Roger suggested a sail out into the sound in his Bahama boat, and Helen eagerly assented. Roger persuaded himself that his purpose in this was simply to see by daylight the mouth of the creek and the waters beyond through which Humphreys had so wonderfully navigated the boat on that black night of tempest. Perhaps

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

that was in fact his moving impulse, but this chronicler of the young man's doings, takes the liberty of doubting that he would have made the little excursion if he had been quite alone.

After passing the mouth of the creek Roger sailed some miles seaward before turning about. When he did so the wind had fallen to a mere breath, barely enough to give the boat steerage way, or a trifle more, of speed. Roger thought she would trim better if Helen would change her place to one near the stern where he sat to manage the helm and the sheet. "Besides, the sail will shield you from the sun if you sit here," he said, and Helen was quick to appreciate the advantage of such shelter. All this seems a bit puzzling and inconsistent, as day after day at this hour these two were accustomed to walk or ride in the full light of the declining sun, and it had never before occurred to either of them that Helen had need of protection against its rays.

As they sat there, the boat slowly drifting shorewards, there was nothing for either to do but talk, and so they talked, in low tones, as if out of respect for the silence of the tranquil sea.

"I want to tell you, Roger, all about what has happened to us since you went away, so long ago," said the gentle girl with a note of

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

sadness in her voice. "It hasn't been all good by any means, and much of it I have never quite understood. I have not liked to question mamma about it. She seems to shrink from the subject so that the least mention of it distresses her dreadfully."

"Tell me all that you know," said Roger, tenderly. "I shall like to hear, and the telling may relieve your own mind. When I went away you were living on the Ashley River above Charles Town. I remember the stately mansion, and the splendid avenues of trees—each a mile long, I think—that led from the river on one side and the highway on the other, up to the hospitable house. I was a very little boy when I saw the place for the only time in my life, but the impression of its grandeur has always remained in my mind. I think I never saw a more attractive country seat, even in England."

"Yes, I know," said the girl, with a mist in her eyes as she recalled the old home with all its glories exaggerated in her mind, as things remembered from childhood are apt to be. Then she added:

"That's all gone now. A year or two after you left Carolina, something happened—I don't know what. My father met with some terrible

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

misfortune, I think. He was fearfully excited. He could not sleep or eat, but walked the piazza floor all day and far into the night, saying nothing and seeming not to hear when anybody but mamma spoke to him. When that occurred, he would touch her head caressingly or perhaps kiss her forehead. I have seen people kiss their dead in just the same way. One evening when Maum Rachel had come for me to go to bed, my father took me up in his arms and hugged me close and kissed me fervently. He uttered no word except 'My little Helen,' but I remember that the look in his eyes frightened me so that I dreamed of it all night. The next morning he was gone and a little later came news that he had been swept overboard from a boat's deck, out here in this sound. His body was never recovered, and my mother's grief for him was so great that from that time to this nobody has ever mentioned his name in her presence except under some pressing necessity.

"Soon after his death we left the old house. I have since learned that my father had mortgaged it as heavily as he could a half year before, to raise money for some enterprise which he thought would make him very rich, but which ended in disastrous failure. I suppose

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

that when financial ruin overtook him, he decided to go abroad in the hope of retrieving his fortune. But I have always wondered, if that were so, why he did not take ship at Charles Town, instead of sailing on a little craft from the creek down here. My grandfather—mother's father, you know—lived here then, in the house we now have, and perhaps my father came down here to consult with him, and being here took the only ship he could get. Perhaps he went as a sailor, for he had been much at sea and at one time was part owner and master's mate of a ship. All that is conjecture on my part, however.

“We were very poor for a time, for my grandfather had never forgiven my mother's marriage, and at first he would do nothing for us, except furnish a very little money on which we managed somehow to live in a little house in Charles Town. But your father, Col. Alton, interested himself in our behalf. He visited my grandfather and it is said they had a great quarrel about us. My grandfather had a terrible temper you know, and I think Col. Alton was the only man in Carolina who would have dared, even as his oldest and dearest friend, reprove him for anything he might do. After that my grandfather sent for us and we came

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

here to live with him. I think the sight of my mother's grief softened him, for in spite of his imperious temper he was a man of tender affection, and my mother was his only child. Grandmamma had been dead for years, and when we came down here mamma seemed to creep back into her old place in his heart. A little later he began making me his comrade and confidante. He made one of the stable boys dress himself in skirts and ride a splendid young sorrel with a side saddle, until the animal learned to tolerate a woman rider. Then he gave the horse to me and every morning when he set out to ride over the plantations I had to ride with him. I must have been a queer figure, perched upon the back of a great horse nearly seventeen hands high; but grandpapa would not ride without me, even when it rained, and as for ponies he held them in contempt. He taught me to ride my horse over fences and ditches and logs and to make the powerful creature do my bidding.

“You will not wonder that I grew to love the old gentleman with all possible tenderness, while he seemed more and more to delight in me. He would stand me up by the wall and measure me to see if I were growing satisfactorily. He would push my hair back from my

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

forehead and study my features intently and with manifest pleasure. In a thousand ways he petted and spoiled me.

“One day my grandfather went away to Charles Town, and was gone for a week. He told me before starting that he had to go on business; and bade me go each morning to the stables and see to it that the horses were properly groomed. ‘You’re fourteen years old now, and getting to be a tall girl,’ he said. ‘I’m training you to superintend the plantations, so that when the time comes for me to quit, you’ll know how to manage the estate for yourself.’

“His words alarmed me for the moment, but he laughed so cheerily that I took his talk for banter, and bade him good-by with only a tear or two. Yet after he had gone, I remembered how carefully he had been explaining the plantation work to me for a year or more past, and how he had been at pains to tell me the reason for everything he had ordered done, a thing that he never did with anybody else. I remembered how once my governess had complained of grandpapa for taking me away from my books for so many hours every day. ‘I protest,’ she said, ‘that your grandfather is educating you for an overseer, instead of let-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

ting me educate you for your proper position as one of the fine ladies of the land.' She said this with a tone that I instantly resented. I flew into a passion and told her I would do no more lessons for her, as she didn't know how to speak to me of my grandfather, and from that hour I held to my resolution. I have never had a lesson since. I did not tell grandpapa why I refused to be further instructed by my governess, but the manifest intensity of my displeasure with her seemed to delight him. Perhaps he saw something of himself in my temper. At any rate he paid the governess a year's extra salary and secured a good employment for her with some friend of his in the up country.

"When grandpapa returned from Charles Town on the occasion I started to tell you about, he seemed worried and not at all well. I knew then that his business in Charles Town had been to consult the doctors. He sent for his lawyer and for two days was engaged with him in the library. Then he resumed his old ways, as if he had thrown a load off his mind. We attended the stables together and rode together as usual, and often he would ask my advice quite seriously as to plantation affairs. One day after we had ridden to the remotest

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

part of the estate to direct the work of opening a new plantation there and laying out some drainage ditches, we rode slowly homeward, like the two very tired people that we were. Presently grandpapa said:

“ ‘Little girl’—he always addressed me so, ‘little girl, you’ll do famously. You’ve learned very rapidly, you decide quickly and with judgment, and you know how to get your orders obeyed. It is very well. You know, little girl, that some day when I die all this estate will be your very own.’

“ Then in answer to my astonished questioning he said:

“ ‘Listen to me, child. Once when I was insanely angry, I swore a great oath that your mother should never inherit a shilling or a shilling’s worth from me. Yes, I know it was shockingly wicked,’ he continued, as if in answer to something he read in my face, ‘and I have long been sorry for it. But I must keep my oath and fortunately I can do so without harming your mother. I have made my will giving *you* everything I have in the world. I’m not afraid that you will ever forget to take the tenderest care of your mother. So far as she is concerned, it will be the same as if I had left the estate to her.’

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“By this time I was crying silently. Finally I blurted out the thought that was in me:

“‘But why did you make a will, Grandpapa? You are not going to die, are you?’

“‘Not if the doctors can prevent it, little girl. They would miss their fees if I got rid of my gout by dying.’

“His manner, more even than his words, reassured me, and as he turned the conversation to lighter themes we were soon chatting as merrily as ever.”

Helen paused at this point in her story, and as Roger looked at her, he saw the struggle she was having to keep back her tears, as she choked out the words: “Grandpapa died alone in his sleep that night.”

The crisis of Roger Alton's life had come. As Helen gave way to her emotion and burst into a torrent of tears but without a moan or an audible sob, he made the great discovery that comes to every true man as a surprise, however clearly others may have foreseen its coming.

He knew that he loved the woman by his side, and that it was his to comfort her.

He passed his arm gently about her, drew her to him with his strongman's strength, and kissed her reverently but fervently. Just then

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

he discovered that the boat was disposed to run her prow into the mud, for she was in the mouth of the creek now, and it required quick attention on his part to bring her back to her course. As he did so, Helen looked at him, smiling through her tears, as the sun breaks through a cloud bank, and asked, timidly:

“Why did you do that, Roger? Was it right?”

“Yes certainly. *I* did it. That to you means that it was right, and it always will mean that to you when *I* do anything.”

“But why? I don’t understand.”

“Yes you do. It was right for me to do what I did because I love you, and you love me.”

Then he passed his arm around her again, and again kissed her, this time without the diamond setting of her tears. After a little she asked timidly,

“How did you know that?”

“How did I know what?”

“What you just now told me?”

“What? That I love you?”

“No, the other.”

“That you love me?”

“Yes, how did you know that?”

“How do I know when the wind blows or

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

the sun shines? How do I know—never mind, I know it. Besides you told me.”

“ I never did, sir ! ” she answered with spirit.

“ Yes you did. You didn’t mean to do so, but you told me, just the same.”

“ How ? ”

“ You let me comfort you with manifestations of my love. You would never have permitted that if you had not loved me, and it wouldn’t have comforted you in that case, either.”

“ Oh, then you didn’t know all this until—until—just now ? ”

“ No. You never gave me a hint of it until ‘ just now. ’ ”

“ I’m glad of that. It comforts me and saves my pride. I thought you meant that you knew it before. But how could you? I couldn’t have told you before, even unconsciously, because I never even dreamed of it myself until—just now. Indeed I don’t think I did love you until you just took it for granted. Somehow you seemed to compel me, and I like that—in you.”

V

IN *which* HELEN *tells a little* STORY

ACCORDING to the social law of the time and country it was Roger Alton's duty to seek out Mrs. Vargave at once and tell her what had happened—no, not just that perhaps, but he was under obligation to tell her that he had made successful love to her daughter, and to notify the mother that at an early day he would ask his father to call upon her and secure her permission for him to propose marriage.

It was not deemed proper in those days in Carolina for a young man to propose marriage in any definite fashion until these forms were fulfilled. In many cases, indeed, marriages were arranged by the parents without much consultation of the young people concerned, and without any love making at all except such as might, perchance, follow betrothal. That minutely and most accurately informed student of Carolinian family papers, Mrs. Harriot Horry Ravenel, in her fascinating sketch of

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

Eliza Pinckney, tell us, that "In those days marriage generally was a very practical affair; not quite so bad as in France; but still the phrase 'a marriage has been arranged' meant precisely what it said."

Yet "maidens chose" even then, as we learn from this same Eliza's letter to her father, quoted by Mrs. Ravenel, in reply to his proposal of two eligible gentlemen, one or the other of whom he wished her to accept as her husband. She rejected both, apparently because she was already, though unconsciously, in love with Charles Pinckney, a married man, whose wife was so greatly attached to her that she "declared her willingness to step down and let Eliza Lucas take her place."

She did "step down" presently, into her grave, and a few months later, Eliza Lucas became her successor as the wife of Charles Pinckney, and afterwards the mother of the two revolutionary heroes, Thomas and Charles Cotesworth Pinckney.

All this happened years before Roger Alton's time. It is cited here as a bit of history showing that maidens, even in that time, were accustomed sometimes at least, to insist upon having their own way in the matter of marriage, and that the observance of conventions

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

was often purely formal. Thus Roger had wooed Helen without anybody's permission, and Helen, as her own mistress, had consented to his wooing. But until the forms were complied with there could be no definite engagement without affront to their parents and offense against the conventionalities of the society in which they lived.

But on that evening Roger had no opportunity to discharge this duty. When the young lovers returned from their little but eventful voyage, an east wind was blowing, with every promise of a cold, gray southern rain. Mrs. Vargave's maid reported that that lady had gone to bed with a severe headache and desired not to be disturbed on any account. So our two young people were left to pass the evening together and without other company. While they were at supper the rain began to pour and the chill came which always comes in that climate when the east wind brings in a rain storm from the sea. The piazza was uninhabitable, and the lovers passed from the supper room to the parlor, where the house servants, trained to be mindful of comfort, had lighted a fire of "fat" pine logs.

There Helen told Roger the rest of her story.

"I forgot the principal thing I set out to tell

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

you to-day," she said soon after they were seated. "You see I went off into a long chapter of reminiscences, and then—well you interrupted me, you know."

"Yes, I think I remember. I—"

"Never mind about that now," she quickly rejoined, "I want to tell you what I forgot to-day. It concerns you, and mind you are not to interrupt again—till I finish."

"Very well, I'll wait that long."

"You know I didn't mean that—"

"Oh, then I'll interrupt before you begin."

And he did. Yet after awhile she told her story.

"Soon after my father went away in trouble and was drowned as I told you, your father was summoned to serve on the Grand Jury. He flatly refused. When the judge told him he must serve he said:

"I positively cannot. Every grand juror is required to swear that he will reveal any evidence he may have of any offence against the law committed within the last six months. It happens that I know of a crime committed within that time, a crime of which I alone am the victim. For the protection of the innocent, and to save a name long honored in Carolina from disgrace, I have decided never to



Helen Vargave.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

tell of it. I deem silence an obligation of honor under the circumstances. I must therefore decline to take the oath of a Grand Juror.'

"The judge told him that what he had said, made it more imperative than ever that he should be compelled to serve. But Col. Alton still refused. The judge then said that it was his duty to fine your father to the utmost extent of his property, and to imprison him till he should yield. Col. Alton calmly replied:

"'You, your honor, know best what your duty is. But I must be sole judge of my own. I cannot serve.'

"'But the mandate of the court absolves you from your honorable obligation of silence,' said the judge.

"'I cannot so regard the matter,' answered Col. Alton, 'and with the profoundest respect for the dignity of this court and for your honor personally, I must positively refuse to obey the court's mandate in this case. My resolution is irrevocable, because my honor compels me to it.'

"The judge was sorely troubled and after awhile he ordered your father to be fined four shillings, and imprisoned for one minute in the county jail. But when the sheriff tried to carry out the second part of the sentence, the

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

people, with my grandfather for their leader, surrounded the jail with guns, axes and whatever other weapons they could find, and declared that they would tear down the jail rather than permit your father's incarceration in it even for one minute. Your father mounted a box and made a speech, begging the people to let the sheriff execute the court's order. He explained to them that his imprisonment in such a cause and for so brief a time, would carry with it neither disgrace nor discomfort to himself, while it would satisfy the requirements of the law. But the people would not listen. At my grandfather's suggestion they unanimously passed a resolution to the effect that Geoffrey Alton should never be imprisoned in any jail they owned. The sheriff reported to the judge that he was prevented by force from putting Col. Alton in jail, and the judge decided that his detention in charge of the sheriff amounted to imprisonment and satisfied the law's requirement. So he discharged Col. Alton and that was the end of the matter. My grandfather used to tell me the story over and over again till I remember almost his exact words. He seemed to want the facts fixed in my mind. Indeed he told me just that one day. He said:

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“ ‘ I once had a great quarrel with Geoffrey Alton, little girl, but he was right and he was brave enough to tell me to my face how wrong I was. Then this affair came up, and he showed himself the bravest, noblest man in the world. I keep on telling you the story of his heroism so that you may never forget any detail of it.’

“ That is all, Roger. But isn't it a glorious story? And how proud you must be that you are the son of such a father! ”

“ I am proud of it,” he replied, “ and you will be proud with me in a little while. Thank you for telling me.”

VI

“GOOD-*by*, SWEETHEART”

ON the next morning the negro boy who had borne Roger's letter to Alton House returned. With him came one of the Alton House serving-men leading a horse of superb physical form and dimensions, but manifestly of exceedingly irritable and energetic temper.

The servant bore two missives, one from Col. Alton, the other from Jacqueline. The father wrote after the formal manner of the time:

“ALTON HOUSE, *Feb.* 14, 1779.

“MY DEAR SON:

“I have detained your messenger a good many days before sending an answer to your letter. I am getting to be an old man and sometimes it causes me pain to write. Please make my apologies to Mrs. Vargave for having made her servant await my partial recovery from an attack of gout.

“Jacqueline is sending you a horse which she thinks you will like to ride. When you find yourself quite recovered from the fatigues of your voyage, please come to Alton House, where we may discuss the grave matters that present themselves.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“ Make my compliments, if you please, to Mrs. Vargave and to her charming daughter Helen.”

That was all. The father had said no word to indicate his attitude toward his son's disobedience. There was nothing to show whether he felt aggrieved and affronted or not, nothing to reassure the youth who had been racked with anxiety for a week lest his father be offended with him.

Jacqueline was less stately and formal. She wrote :

“ I kiss the hand of my brother and bid him welcome home! I am sending you a horse which I have bred for you on your own plantation against your return. I call him ‘ Bullet,’ not so much on account of his speed, though that is great, as because of his suddenness. Look out for that when you mount him. He is as whimsical as a woman but if you are anything like the cavalier you were seven years ago when the stablemen used to nickname you ‘ the little horsefly,’ because of the way you stuck to your horse, you will enjoy subduing this equine demon—for he is quite all of that. I have ridden him twice, and I confess he put all my horsewomanship to the proof.

“ Come to Alton House as soon as may be, my brother. You should receive this letter on the seventeenth of the month. If you set out at once we may expect you about the twentieth or twenty-first. So beginning on the nineteenth I'll order evening and morning fires lighted in your rooms every day, and even warmer than that of the blazing logs will be your welcome from your loving sister—

“ JACK.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“P. S. I suppose it is dreadfully vulgar to sign myself in that way, and my governess of a few years ago would have cut off my supper for three nights in succession for the offence. But I am not writing under that precise lady’s supervision now, and I like to remember in my ears how cheery it used to sound to me when you called me ‘Jack.’ I shall always be ‘Jack’ to you. To everybody else I am, humbly and obediently,

“JACQUELINE ALTON.”

As I transcribe this letter from its original manuscript, yellow with age, frayed at the edges, and worn nearly through at the folds, I am impressed with the thought that the young woman who wrote it was not properly appreciative of that governess of whose prim precision she wrote so lightly. For the letter shows that she had at any rate taught Jacqueline Alton how to spell, an accomplishment very unusual among the young women of Carolina, in the eighteenth century, as everyone knows who has read, as I have, many scores of their old letters, reverently preserved in family archives. If any reader feels curiosity to sound all the possibilities of erratic spelling by a young woman of unusually varied and thorough education in other things than orthography, he may satisfy himself by a perusal of the charming letters of Eliza Lucas, preserved for us by Mrs. Ravenel, in her book “Eliza Pinckney.” That gifted young woman was as ex-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

pert in devising novel and original mis-spellings, as she was in conducting the affairs of three plantations, managing a little fleet of sloops, developing the culture and manufacture of indigo, making herself a leader in the best society of the time, and discussing grave political questions with acute intelligence. She so conducted her life as maiden, wife and mother, that a century and more after her death she is everywhere held in honor as the best type of the colonial dame, and a conspicuous example of the revolutionary matron, sending her gallant sons forth to do battle for their country, with a fortitude on her own part, even greater than their manly courage could match. As we read her letters, in which "hot" is spelled with two "t"s, "suppose" is usually "sopose," and other words are even more curiously twisted out of their customary forms, our only regret is that fire destroyed the greater part of those epistles and that so few of them remain to us.

But this is a digression. Roger Alton was now under his father's commands, and must proceed at once to Alton House. What welcome he was to have at the hands of his father, he could not even conjecture. But in any event he felt that he had done only his duty as

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

a man, and he was content to take the consequences, whatever of distress they might involve for himself. In this attitude of mind he found himself greatly strengthened by the story that Helen had told him of his father's resolute disregard of personal consequences when impelled by his convictions of honor to disobey the mandate of a court that had power to punish.

"Surely," the young man said to himself, "my father would not exact of me a disregard of honorable obligation to which no power on earth could compel him upon like occasion. Obedience is not the highest of virtues; though our religion is founded upon a theology which holds disobedience to have been the supreme, primal sin. Be it as it may, I have done only what my manhood required at the hands of one born to an honorable name such as I bear. I will hold my head erect as an Alton should and ask no man's pardon—not even my father's—for doing right."

With that resolution he prepared for his journey, which he decided to begin immediately after luncheon. In the meantime he had duly notified Mrs. Vargave of his love making to Helen and of that maiden's acquiescence. Mrs. Vargave received the tidings with evi-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

dent apprehension upon some account which the young man could not even guess at.

“When your father asks Helen’s hand for you,” she said, “she shall be yours with all the blessings that a mother’s love can bestow. But he may see fit not to ask that, and I beg of you, Roger, and shall beg of Helen, to be prepared for that contingency.”

“But why do you anticipate such an event?” asked the young man in displeasure. “Surely there is no spinster in America better fit than is your daughter to mate with the best in all the land. No woman is fitter than she to preserve in honor the traditions of Alton House. My father will be proud of his mission when he comes to you to ask her hand in marriage for his only son.”

“Perhaps,” said the lady, doubtingly, “I earnestly hope so. At any rate, if he asks me, I shall surrender my child to your keeping, Roger, with the sure conviction that Providence or Fate has come to her, bearing its best gifts. But wait. Wait till you know what your father’s view of the matter is.”

“He can have but one view—the one I have suggested. If by any possibility—a thing utterly inconceivable to me—he should entertain a different one, why, I am a man, full-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

grown and able to order my own life. In such a case I should marry Helen in face of all objections. I am next in succession as the head of the family, and I declare on my honor that I will make Helen Vargave my wife and the mother of all the Altons that are to come after me, or, failing that for any reason, the Alton name shall cease to be, when I pass from the stage."

There was nothing for the gentle lady to say except—"Thank you, Roger, and God prosper your purpose."

With that delicate consideration which is the dominant characteristic of all high-bred women, Mrs. Vargave remembered her headache and went to her room, leaving the young people to take their luncheon together without other company and to take leave of each other without matronly supervision.

Nevertheless it was with a sore spot in his heart that Roger vaulted into his saddle—for the demoniacal animal at that moment decided not to permit his master to mount him in any orderly fashion—and waved his last "good-by, sweetheart" to the girl on the veranda. Mrs. Vargave's manner more than her words, had awakened in his mind an apprehension so vague and intangible that he could no more

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

reason with it than he could dismiss it as a foolish fear. He told himself, over and over again, that there could be no possibility of his father objecting to his marriage with Helen. Her family, on both sides was as good even as his own, and he knew that his father had always cherished them in closest affection. Yet Mrs. Vargave had seemed gravely to doubt that Col. Alton would welcome an alliance with them. What could it all mean? Merely a sensitive gentlewoman's reserve in a matter so closely concerning her daughter, he tried to argue with himself. But the argument would not fit itself to the circumstances. Why should not Mrs. Vargave, if she knew no reason to anticipate his father's objection, have said to him, as gentlewomen usually did to suitors for their daughters' hands, "My answer will be ready when your father calls to ask for it?" That formula had from time immemorial satisfied the pride of the stateliest dames of the Carolinas. Why had Mrs. Vargave sought out another?

Just as our young man had reached this point in his perplexity, his horse, Bullet, decided that the light gallop at which they were going was unworthy of his mettle and his exalted lineage—for Bullet came from an equine

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

family as aristocratic in its way as Roger's own. Were there not cups and trophies hung upon the walls of Alton House, which had been won by Bullet's parents and grandparents in strenuous speed competitions with the bluest blooded horses on the American continent?

So Bullet suddenly broke into a run as if for stakes. His master enjoyed the exercise, and when, at the end of a mile, Bullet decided to dispense with a rider, and to that end began a struggle to dislodge the man in the saddle, Roger enjoyed that controversy also, the more because he was confident of victory in it. His saddle girth gave way, but he met that difficulty by placing his bridle-hand upon the horse's withers, raising himself by sheer strength, slipping the saddle from under him, and settling himself in the bareback seat of his boyhood.

Having accomplished this the young man felt better in his mind, and when at last Bullet acknowledged him as master, the doubts that had so vexed his soul were dissipated and he was again in that optimistic mood which most becomes healthful youth. His saddle was in the ditch a quarter or half mile in rear, but his servant would pick that up when he came to it, and as for the rest he no longer felt

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

any serious forebodings concerning his father's attitude and action. There is nothing in the world like a victorious struggle with an ill-disposed horse, to give a strong man faith in himself and in the future.

It was with unperturbed spirits therefore that the young man, about nightfall, rode up to a little country inn, with a pendulous sign that offered "Entertainment for man and Beast." When his servant came up Roger went himself to the stables to see to the bedding, feeding and rubbing down of the horses, and not until their coats were as sleek as satin did he consent to have his own freed from the stains of travel.

VII

IN *which* ROGER ALTON ENCOUNTERS *the*
ENEMY

AFTER a supper specially prepared for him—for the meal hour was long past—Roger sat in the room assigned to him, with candles unlighted, but with a blaze of “lightwood,” as the fat, resinous pine of the South is called, to stimulate his imagination. Now that he had resumed his homeward journey in blank uncertainty as to the reception that awaited him at Alton House, and with the still more anxious apprehension as to the outcome of his love making with which Mrs. Vargave’s words had filled his mind, he was overtaken by a great wave of anxiety to shorten the time of suspense to the utmost.

“How far is it to Alton House?” he asked when his servant came in to take his final orders for the night.

“I’m not sure that I rightly know, Mas’ Roger,” answered the ebony hued young giant

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

of nineteen or about that age, "but I judge it to be about fifty miles."

"Where did you learn to talk in that way?" asked the master, in surprise at the partial absence of rude dialect forms from the serving man's speech.

"Well, you see, sir, Mis' Jacqueline makes all the black boys and girls go to school to her, so's to learn to read and write, and when I was learning that I tried to learn to talk like white people."

"Your Mis' Jacqueline certainly had an apt pupil in you."

"Well you see, Mas' Roger, she was mighty good to me, and when she saw me trying to learn and not just shirking like the rest, she sort o' laid herself out to teach me. I don't talk right yet, but anyway I aint like the no-account rest of 'em. Mis' Jacqueline said she wanted me to learn so's to surprise you when you got home again."

"Oh, then I knew you as a chap before I went away? What's your name?"

"Marlborough, sir. Don't you remember you named me out of a history book? That was when I was ten years old. Up to that time my name was Jake."

Roger remembered perfectly, and his greet-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

ing of the plantation playfellow of his boyhood was warm enough to fill young Marlborough with joyous elation. The young master was surprised at the progress his black boy had made in learning, but he was in no way surprised to learn of his sister's activity in teaching the youthful negroes to read. That was the general custom of young mistresses in Carolina then. The laws making it a penal offence to teach negroes to read were enforced only when the abolition of slavery became a subject of political agitation, filling the people of the South with apprehension of negro revolt and the massacre of their families. Those laws were regarded solely as self-defensive measures in the face of a great danger. Until that danger was threatened, it was deemed the high duty and privilege of the white people to instruct and civilize the blacks, many of whom, in the Carolinas, were native African savages, of recent importation.

The greeting over, Roger returned to the matter he had in mind.

“ We must do the whole distance to-morrow, Marlborough. Have the horses ready at seven o'clock. Now you'd better get to bed. Have they given you a good place to sleep? ”

Marlborough declared himself satisfied with

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

his quarters, and bade his master good night. But the master did not go at once to bed. His mind was still filled with visions of the future, with plans and purposes and a thousand questions, when the low talking that had been going on for some time in the next room, began to grow excited, so that the young man could not help hearing most of it through the thin board partition and the loosely-fitting door that separated the two apartments.

The men in the other room were playing at cards. Or rather they had been playing, but now they seemed to be neglecting their game in the excitement of discussion. One of them was volubly expounding to the others the prospects of a speedy British conquest of Carolina.

"I tell you," he said, "when Gen. Prevost gets through with the Georgia rebels, he'll quick enough cross into South Carolina and give the rebels here their lesson. He'll take Charles Town first, and the rest'll be easy. There's nobody to stop him except Lincoln and he can't do it with his ragged continentals and Carolina militia. Just wait and you'll see merry times here. We'll all get our chance—we loyalists—and you take my advice and keep mum till the redcoats come. Then we'll be masters here."

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

The speaker was manifestly in his cups, and as he went on his voice rose higher and higher. The rest were less drunk or more discreet, but Roger easily made out enough of their conversation to understand that they belonged to that despicable class that had been mentioned by Mrs. Vargave—men without convictions, who were awaiting the turn of events before committing themselves to either side in the war. Prevost's presence at Savannah, his activity and success in the work of overrunning the upper Georgia country, and the manifest weakness of Lincoln's opposing force, had greatly encouraged the disposition of such men in South Carolina to become tories as soon as the invasion of that state by the British should be an accomplished fact, and in the meantime to remain as completely uncommitted as possible.

"What will happen when the British get control, think you?" asked one of the listeners.

"What will happen?" asked the pot valiant one in reply. "Why they'll hang the worst of the rebels and confiscate the property of the rest. Some of that will come to us loyalists as a reward for our faithfulness to the cause of our king."

"You're one of the loyal ones I suppose," interjected another of the group. "Well, it

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

seems to me I remember that you served in the patriot ranks as a militiaman, till the shooting began, and then you ran away. What will the British say to that?"

"I couldn't help myself. I was forced——"

"Forced to run away?"

"No. I was forced to serve in the militia, and I ran only because I was too loyal to stand against the king's men."

"Stuff and nonsense!" contemptuously replied the other. "You were hot for serving. You tried to get me to serve. You even told me that the patriots were sure of independence, and threatened me with confiscation if I refused."

Obviously the braggart had met an adversary with whom he did not care to dispute further. So he changed the course of the conversation.

"There's some that try to save themselves by playing on both sides of the game. There's old Geoffrey Alton for one. He has given the governor a thousand pounds to buy ammunition with, but he is keeping his only son in England all the while. If the rebels win he'll be the biggest one among 'em. If the British conquer the colonies, and they are sure to do that, he'll set his young son up as an English-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

man, and try to save his property that way. But——”

At this juncture the door between the two rooms was kicked off its hinges and a stalwart young man without any coat on, stalked through the space it had occupied. After one look at the group as the men rose from their chairs, he said in a voice of singular blandness:

“May I ask which of you was the last speaker in the conversation I have felt myself called upon to interrupt?”

“It is none of your business,” answered one.

“Oh, thank you,” said the youth. “I recognize the voice. You were the speaker then. I am Roger Alton, Geoffrey Alton’s son, and I have intruded here for the purpose of slapping your face for the remarks you have been pleased to make about my father.”

The words were not out of his mouth when he struck his antagonist two sharp blows with his open palm, one upon either side of his head.

Then he stepped back, saying:

“My name, as I have already told you, is Roger Alton. I am staying in this tavern, in the room adjoining this one. If anyone here desires to call my conduct in question, I shall be easily found.”

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

With that he returned to his own room while the men whose conversation he had interrupted stood for a moment speechless with astonishment. Then they ran to the hallway and shouted for the landlord, while Roger was futilely endeavoring to make the unhinged door stand upright again.

The house was speedily roused and the stables also, for among the first to arrive upon the scene was Marlborough, carefully dressed in his close-fitting groom's costume. Roger had seated himself again before his fire when Marlborough entered. He had donned his coat and sat evidently awaiting results.

"Well, Marlborough, I see you respond promptly to the call of duty. So did your namesake, the duke. I did well in naming you."

Then, after a pause—

"Do you know what gentlemen have plantations near by?"

Marlborough evidently understood the situation, for he answered:

"The only one I think of that you'd like to have with you in a business like this is Mas' Charles Barnegal. He lives about seven miles away, sir."

"Charlie Barnegal! Of course. Just the man. Can you ride Bullet?"

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

"Surely, Mas' Roger. *You* taught me to ride,"—as if that settled it.

"Yes, I remember. I told you you must be able to ride anything that happened to possess a back. Very well, saddle Bullet, he's faster than the horse you're riding, and give him his head. I want you to take a note to my friend."

As Marlborough disappeared through the door, Roger caught sight of the landlord, and called to him to enter.

"I am afraid I have damaged your door somewhat," he said in a placid tone of voice. "As I shall be leaving here in the morning, I wish you would examine the thing and estimate the cost of repairs."

The landlord looked at the door with its broken panels and wrenched-off hinges, and shook his head, saying "I'm afraid a new door will be necessary. It will cost me a matter of five shillings I think."

"Is that all? Here take a guinea and we'll call the matter settled. I have a note to write."

The thrifty Boniface pocketed the gold with a chuckle, muttering to himself—"It will build the partition wall I've always wanted between these rooms."

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

Roger called to him as he descended the stairs, and bade him send a dozen extra candles, and bring his bill. Then the young man hastily scribbled the note that Marlborough was to bear to his old-time boy friend.

“MY DEAR CHARLIE,” it ran, “I have had to slap a fellow’s ears for his insolence here, and of course I shall hear from him before morning. If you have anything of the old spirit of our boyhood left in you, after all these years, you will be glad to ride over and act for me. I haven’t seen you since we were fourteen years old or so, but you know the adage about the twig and the tree, and I remember how ready you used to be for any battle in any good cause.

“Ride over as quickly as you can, and forever oblige,

“Your old comrade,

“ROGER ALTON.

“TORRANCE’S TAVERN.”

Soon after Marlborough set off with this missive, promising for Bullet and himself to reach the Barnegal plantation within three quarters of an hour, the landlord knocked at Roger’s door, and upon entering informed the young man that three of the four men who

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

had occupied the next room—now vacated—wished to speak with him “in quite a friendly way.”

Roger bade the landlord usher them into his presence, and arose to receive them. One of them announced their names, and said:

“Mr. Alton, we have come to make our apologies for even listening to the words that you have so properly resented. I beg you to believe that we three were merely listeners, and perhaps you could not help overhearing enough of what was said to discover that we rather ridiculed than accepted the boastful utterances of our companion. At any rate we assure you that such was the case—gentlemen I speak for all of us, do I not?—and we have come, as I said before to beg your pardon, as gentlemen should, upon such an occasion.”

Roger paused half a minute before replying. From the first he had been resolute to keep his tongue in leash and his temper under a tight rein, so that no indiscretion might mar his conduct of the quarrel. After the pause he said, with a very marked calmness of manner,

“I accept your apologies, gentlemen. I have not had the honor of meeting any of you before, and this meeting would be a pleasure to me, except for my—well let me say my regret

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

for the company you have been keeping. Let us put that aside. Your apology—in which I understood that you all share?”—he paused till his implied question was answered affirmatively by each—“your apology leaves no ground of offence between you and me.”

The spokesman thanked him, and then added—

“The other man—the one whose language you so justly resented—”

“And whose ears I slapped,” interjected Roger.

“Yes, whose ears you slapped,” assented the spokesman, “has been put to bed, drunk. Perhaps you will overlook his offence, in consideration of his intoxicated condition.”

“Oh, as to that,” said Roger still speaking with the gentleness of a professor expounding a principle to a female seminary class, “as to that I conceive that it is his business to communicate with me rather than mine to consider him. I have slapped his jaws before witnesses, as you remember. I have notified him of my whereabouts and of my readiness to answer for my conduct. Naturally I expect him to call upon me to justify or atone for my acts. To that end I have sent my servant for a friend to represent me. If the person whose jaws I have

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

slapped, does not ask for reparation, I shall of course post him in the tavern porch as a liar and a coward, and proceed upon my way to Alton House, where I had hoped to be by nightfall of the coming day."

"But the man is hopelessly drunk," broke in one of the others.

"That entails upon me the disagreeable necessity of waiting here till he becomes sober again," answered Roger. "I could not think of depriving him of the opportunity of meeting me."

"He will apologize of course," said the one who had acted as spokesman.

"He can make no apology that I can accept. He has insolently traduced my father. Even his drunkenness cannot excuse that. I have punished him by putting upon him in the presence of others the worst affront that it is possible for one man to put upon another. I have publicly slapped his jaws. I now decline, very peremptorily and finally, to accept any apology at his hands. You tell me that he is at present drunk. Very well, I will tarry here, as I said before, till he gets sober. Gentlemen, I bid you good night."

So he bowed them out.

A few minutes later there came a furious

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

clatter of hoofs in the road below, and before Roger thought there was time for one to fling himself from his horse, Charles Barnegal came up the stairs three steps at a time, rushed into the room, and clasped the comrade of his boyhood in his stalwart arms.

“Welcome home, old fellow!” he said. “So you’re at it already? Fighting the enemy? By the way, who is the enemy?”

After returning the greeting Roger said,—

“I believe the man’s name is Gilfoyle, or something like that.”

“Gilfoyle—oh yes, I know him. He’s scarcely a gentleman. If he forced a quarrel on you you might very well refuse to meet him, as a man not in our class. But—”

“But in this case I desire to meet him,” said Roger. “One doesn’t exact that a cur shall be a dog of gentlemanly demeanor before kicking him for snarling.”

“Oh certainly not,” said Barnegal. “I was only thinking what a favor you will confer upon this fellow by fighting him. You’ll actually set him up in the community by recognizing him as a man entitled to be confronted by a gentleman at ten paces from a pistol’s mouth. By the way, where are your pistols? I’ll look them over while you stir up the land-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

lord and the cook and order some breakfast. No gentleman should fight on an empty stomach. It unsteadies his nerves, and besides, if he should happen to get a bullet lodged anywhere in his anatomy, the doctors wouldn't let him eat anything for oh, ever so long."

"You're the same old Charlie, I see," said Roger grasping his hand. "You make a jest of everything. But as I am distinctly hungry, and as daylight must be near, I'll order breakfast at once."

He left the room for that purpose, and meantime young Barnegal had possessed himself of Roger's pistols and had set to work to put them in perfect order, with newly fringed flints, and barrels "as clean as a hound's tooth" in the bore, as he said.*

The breakfast was ordered through Marlborough, and that ebony aristocrat not only served it, but superintended its preparation. He apologized for the coffee:—

"The coffee ain't up to standard, Mas' Roger, but that's because there ain't no—ain't any good coffee in the house. I stopped the cook from making it in a pot full of old grounds

* Gov. Roosevelt did not invent that simile. I found it thirty odd years ago in an old manuscript, used precisely as it is here.—*Author.*

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

anyhow. I'd have broken her neck for trying that trick, if she'd been a man. As it was I only kicked the coffee pot into kingdom come, so's she had to make your coffee in a kettle. I had to throw out three pans of poached eggs before I got one that wasn't overdone. No gentleman can pull a trigger right when he has a hard egg in his stomach. As for the ham, I broiled that myself on the point of a stick."

"The breakfast is quite satisfactory, Marlborough," said the master. "Indeed I count your campaign in the kitchen as one of the best you ever fought. By the way, do you belong to me, or to my father, or to your Mis' Jacqueline?"

"I am proud to belong to you, Mas' Roger," answered the man. "My mother was your Maumy, you know, and she was one of the people from your place."

"Oh yes I know. I remember Maumy and when she died I shed the bitterest tears of my life—God rest her dear soul! Never mind that now. I like you, Marlborough, and if you'll hand me that pen, ink and paper over there, I'll set you free, this instant, in case anything should happen to me. You deserve it. You have tried to make a man of yourself."

The negro relapsed instantly into the dialect

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

of his race, as he always did when moved to strong emotion.

“ For Gawd’s sake don’t, Mas’ Roger. I’s e Marlborough Alton now. If you sets me free, I’ll be jest Marlborough nothing—or may be jest Jake. For the Lawd’s sake, my mastah don’t set me free, but jes’ lem me be your own pussonal servant as I is now. Lem’ me go to de wah wid you an’, foh de Lawd, Marlborough Alton ’ll never disgrace de name he beahs! ”

And so this hereditary bondman remained, of his own free choice, in a slavery that made him a member of a distinguished family and held him in close bonds of affection with its people.

I have no purpose, in recording this incident, which is only one among thousands of like kind, to say one word in favor of the institution of slavery,—now dead and done for,—with all its possibilities of evil. I desire only as a faithful chronicler to show how the more strictly domestic and personally serving negroes regarded the institution, how closely the ties of affection were knitted between them and their kindly masters, and how great the pride of servants was in their dependence upon families of distinction. Marlborough’s case was historic in the family to which he belonged, and I have faithfully transcribed the tradition. I have in

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

my own person known many others like it, one of which at least, I have lovingly recorded in literature.*

An hour passed, daylight came, and still no word had been received from Roger's antagonist. Finally that young man lost patience and sent Marlborough to summon the landlord. When he entered, Roger asked placidly:

"Has the drunken gentleman got sober yet? Is he out of bed?"

The landlord hesitated, and the hesitation was irritating.

"Why don't you answer? Or must I ask my friend to go and look the fellow up?"

"Well sir," said Boniface at last, "I hope you won't blame me. You'll remember that *I* didn't tell you he had gone to bed. It was the other gentlemen who said that."

"What do you mean?" asked Roger, delivering his questions like pistol shots. "Where is the fellow? What do you know? Answer, man, or I'll—pshaw! I didn't mean to lose my temper with a tavern keeper. But answer me."

* See the story "My Friend Phil.," in *Southern Soldier Stories.*—*Author.*

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

In that day, and for nearly a century afterwards, southern hospitality held country tavern keeping in something like contempt. The tavern keeper was a man who charged money for entertaining strangers, and no southern gentleman would do that. So the tavern keeper was held to be an inferior, and naturally he was so, because only men of inferior character would subject themselves to the discredit of engaging in an occupation that was held in marked disrepute, however honorable that occupation might be in itself.

“Well you see, sir, I think Mr. Gilfoyle was afraid to remain till morning. He said he wasn’t afraid of you sir—though perhaps that might have had something to do with it—but he has been talking a good deal in this part of the country, and if anything—well anything emphatic happened about it, he might get into trouble. So he went away about midnight.”

“Where did he go?”

“He didn’t say, sir. But he took the main road south, and I reckon he’s gone to Georgia for safety, sir.”

Roger looked at Barnegal in bewilderment. Barnegal tried to look serious, but failed. Instead he burst out laughing.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“Gone to Georgia for safety, eh? Well he possesses the better part of valor anyhow. Roger I’ll never forgive you for breaking up my night’s sleep to deal with a fellow like that. Still, before I completely break with you, and just for the sake of hearing about your return to America and all the rest of it, I’m going to ride half way to Alton House with you to-day. Perhaps I may even overlook the past and take you into my favor again, if you’ll promise to select the right kind of men to quarrel with hereafter. Call out an overseer, next time, or a tavern keeper, or a sturdy beggar, but no more Gilfoyles please.”

Roger did not yet quite understand. “Why has the fellow gone to Georgia?” he asked.

“Why, you ridiculous Englishman, don’t you understand that he is an emissary caught in the act of stirring up sedition? He’s an agent of the British and he has fled to their protection, to save his neck from a stretching.”

“Oh well, I’ll post him as a coward, and—”

“What use will there be in that? He’ll never come to this region again unless it is behind a British regiment, and he won’t mind what you or any body else says or thinks about him.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

Save your paper and your temper, and let Marlborough bring us a second cup of coffee to ride on. We'll be off by eight o'clock."

So ended Roger Alton's first conflict with the enemy.

VIII

ALTON HOUSE

IT was seven o'clock in the evening and quite dark when Roger and his serving man turned out of the highway, into the mile long live-oak avenue that led up to Alton House. The great gnarled branches of the oaks arched completely over the driveway meeting in the middle and forming a canopy through which scarcely a star could send a beam of light. The long gray moss, hanging almost to the ground on the sides of the road and festooned in the middle to the level of a horseman's head, rendered the darkness almost tangible.

“There's nothing for it, Marlborough, but to give the horses their heads,” said Roger after riding twice into the ditch, “and let them find their own footing.”

Just then the hoofbeats of horses were heard in front, a thing that required attention in a time of such disturbance and in a place so

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

lonely. For Alton House stood near the middle of an estate of thirty thousand acres, nine-tenths of which was a primeval woodland, and there were highwaymen in the country side willing enough to take advantage of the loneliness. Roger knew that his coming had been heralded from the tavern where his altercation with Gilfoyle had occurred; he was known to carry gold on his person, the sum of which might easily have been exaggerated in the minds of lawless night-riders; and there was the added chance of an encounter with vengeful tories, set on perhaps by his skulking antagonist of the night before, to take a satisfaction which Gilfoyle had not dared seek in the open. That worthy had taken the road south, or at least the landlord had so reported. But the landlord might have lied, or if he had told the truth, the man might easily have changed his route. With six or eight hours the start, nothing could be easier than for him to reach the Alton House estate in advance of its returning heir. And what was likelier than that he, with a companion or two, should select the darkness of the live-oak avenue as a cover for his contemplated crime?

These thoughts occurred to Marlborough as well as to his master, and with a prudence

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

that suggested the strategist, the young negro said in a low tone :

“ We’d better stop under the trees at the side of the road, Mas’ Roger, an’ keep still till it’s time to shoot.”

But Roger was quite otherwise minded.

“ No,” he said, almost in a whisper. “ This is Alton House property, and I’ve a right to ride up this road without asking anybody’s permission. We’ll keep right on in the open and if anybody disputes our way we’ll defend ourselves. Have your pistols ready,” for the trusted servant had been fully armed before being sent on the long journey to Lonsdale in charge of two valuable horses.

Then Roger transferred his own pistols from his belt to his boot tops, for greater convenience in use, unslung his rifle and laid that weapon across the saddle in front of him.

Meantime the hoofbeats ahead, drew rapidly nearer, and though they were muffled by the sand of the road, Marlborough’s practiced ear was able to make out from their sound that the approaching cavalcade numbered but two riders.

“ Very well,” said Roger when Marlborough informed him of the fact, “ that’s just one apiece for us.”

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

Just then a glint of white appeared, and Marlborough recognized it.

“Don’t shoot, sir,” he eagerly called out, “it’s Mis’ Jack on her white filly.”

A moment later the twin brother and sister were clasped in each other’s arms, though still on horseback. Bullet objected, of course. Or perhaps it was not so much objection on his part as recognition of an opportunity. Here was his chance to unhorse the young man who had so gallantly mastered him less than two days before, and he seized it. Roger had let his bridle fall as he embraced his sister, whose horse’s head was turned in a direction opposite Bullet’s own. So Bullet broke instantly into a run, thinking, doubtless, to throw both his enemies to the ground. And but for Roger’s superb strength and quickness it would have fared ill with Jacqueline, who had thrown her foot from the stirrup, the better to embrace her brother. Instantly seeing that to loose his hold would be to let his sister fall, the stalwart young athlete lifted the girl out of her saddle, and swung her to a seat on Bullet’s withers with his right arm, while with the other he regained possession of his bridle. The beast,—which ought to have been born a century later as a locomotive—became infuriated

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

when he felt the unaccustomed weight on his withers and on his neck. He ceased to run, and began instead to rear and plunge in a way that at times threatened a complete backward summersault, and Roger, with but one hand free, had the greatest difficulty in saving his sister, who of course had no adequate seat forward of the saddle, from falling under the maddened animal's hoofs.

Marlborough and the groom who had accompanied Jacqueline on her night ride, dismounted and came up as quickly as possible, and in the darkness tried to seize Bullet's bridle by the bit. With one of his forehoofs the horse knocked the groom down, nearly braining him. Marlborough had better fortune or a superior skill. He caught the bridle in his left hand, and with a dexterous reach seized the horse by the nostrils, compressing them in a vise-like grip that completely stopped the animal's breath, for a horse breathes only through the nostrils. Twice the negro was lifted into the air and violently dashed to earth again, but with truly heroic determination, he held on, regardless of himself, until the beast sank to his knees, exhausted by his inability to breathe. Jacqueline quickly slipped off and stepped well out of the way of possible hoofblows.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“Is you safe, Mis’ Jack?” asked Marlborough whose excitement was too great for grammar. Upon learning that she was quite safe the negro released his hold, and after two or three deep inspirations, Bullet regained strength enough to stagger to his feet again with his master still on his back, for Roger Alton was much too learned in horse-lore not to know that Bullet would interpret dismounting on his part as surrender and take heart for future exploits of demoniacal revolt against the mastery of man.

A few hurried inquiries revealed that Jacqueline was unhurt, that the groom, though severely knocked about, was not dangerously injured, and that Marlborough had come out of the encounter with no worse results than a few contusions which he declared did not “even call for opodeldoc.”

When Jacqueline had remounted her filly, and Roger had recovered his rifle, dropped in the course of the struggle, the brother and sister resumed the journey toward home, Bullet still showing physical feebleness from the suffocation that Marlborough had administered, but still manifesting an unbroken spirit by violent snortings and head shakings. He had had a second lesson in subjection, and he did not like it.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“Though you are not hurt, dear,” said Roger as the servants fell to the rear, “your nerves must be terribly shaken.”

“Not a bit of it,” answered the girl with a laugh. “My nerves are thoroughly well behaved—much more tractable indeed than their owner is. Nothing ever unsettles them. They are true Alton nerves, and a little escapade like that rather titilates than shocks them. Don’t you think there was a mistake Roger? Oughtn’t I to have been your brother, instead of your sister?”

“Then I should have been the girl,” answered the stalwart youth with a smile in his voice.

“Oh no! no! you’d be a monster as a woman! Think of a girl over six feet high and weighing a hundred and ever so many pounds? That would be dreadful! But if I had been a boy too, maybe I’d have grown up a bit more. Think of it Roger, I’m only a mite of a girl, five feet high—when I stretch a little—and—don’t tell anybody—but I can run and jump as high as that!”

“How do you know that?”

“Oh I’ve tried it, over a fence, and oh Roger, cousin Jane caught me doing it, only yesterday, and was terribly shocked. I’m glad

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

there's no trouble with her heart! She'd be dead by this time, if there were. But she's hard at work, I know, on a lecture to be delivered for my sole edification, on 'The Duty of a Well Bred Young Woman to Comport Herself with Dignity and Modesty.' There's a capital letter to every word in that phrase, and she'll lay stress upon every single one of them."

"So you've been misbehaving, have you?"

"Oh yes, I always do that. I'm dreadful! Cousin Jane will tell you so. You see I can spell English correctly and I can't conjugate French verbs half right. Isn't that fearful. Now get a good rein on Bullet, for I'm going to kiss you, Roger!"

A moment later she resumed her rattling chatter.

"But I haven't told you the worst. I can swim like a duck, and I wear heels on my shoes! Isn't it awful? Cousin Jane says it's a disgrace to the family, and she often says 'poor motherless child, what will become of her?' And then father laughs, and then cousin Jane says, 'why Geoffrey, she's shamefully healthy! Shamefully, I tell you!' Now that you're home again, Roger, maybe you'll reform me. You see I can ride and shoot, and swim and walk, and jump—particularly with a pole, but

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

please don't tell cousin Jane about that—and I know how to graft trees and put bandages on when anybody gets hurt; but Roger dear, I don't know a note of my music, and I can't embroider to save my life, and I have to get my maid to do even my plain sewing, and worst of all I forget to answer my letters! I tell you I ought to have been a boy! They don't expect anything from a boy except to be healthy and polite to women and tell the truth, and *fight*. I could do all that. I've got my pistols in my saddle holsters now, for that matter, and even cousin Jane says that in these troubled times, if young women will persist in riding about without an escort, they ought to have weapons of defence. And then she adds, 'but how a well bred woman could ever shoot a pistol, even at a man I simply cannot imagine.'

After a pause, Jacqueline resumed in a soberer tone.

"I'm going to cry a little now Roger, just for joy at your home-coming. I've tried to talk it off, but I can't," and with that she opened the flood gates. It was only for half a minute however. Then she took Roger's hand tenderly in her own and said:

"I've ordered your supper in my rooms, brother, and we'll take the meal together. I

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

'cut' supper to-night just so that we might take this first home meal with each other. I knew you'd be here this evening, and ever since tea time I've been riding back and forth here in the avenue, waiting for you. I was determined that nobody, not even a hostler or a stable boy should be before me in greeting you with a welcome."

"That was very loving and sisterly in you, Jack, dear, and my home coming is the happier because of it. But how is our father?" for he would not ask how the father regarded his disobedience.

"He's better now than for a month past," replied the girl with great tenderness in her voice. "Poor dear father, how he does suffer sometimes! And how bravely and cheerfully he bears it all! Roger, do you know I think him the bravest, noblest man in all the world? Anybody can face danger with a calm front if he makes up his mind to do it. Pride helps mightily in that. But only the very greatest heroes can endure agonizing pain as father does, without ever a murmur. Father never utters a complaint. Better still, he never pities himself, and I read in a wise old book once, that 'self pity is the worst and yet the most universal of human weaknesses.' Even when

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

father is suffering so terribly that I know it is agony for him merely to exist, he never utters a harsh word to a blundering servant whose awkwardness gives him pain. *I* do all that for him afterwards, when he isn't by to hear, and little by little I've so arranged it that none but the cleverest, gentlest, and deftest handed of the servants ever goes into his presence."

"Good girl! good girl!" responded Roger. "That's better than music or French, though I'm going to teach you French—not out of a book, but out of my mouth and through your ear—but tell me, Jack, will not my father be with us at supper?"

"No, dear, he cannot. He is entertaining some gentlemen to-night, great men, some of them ever so great, and you know how scrupulous he is in matters of hospitality. Of course he would come to greet you on your arrival, if he were informed of it, but I have charged the servants not to tell him. So we'll ride up to a side entrance, you will go to your rooms and put on your best—poor boy, you can't have much in your valise and saddle bags, but I've ordered a tailor to come early to-morrow—then we'll have supper, and after that you shall descend to the parlor and meet father there, surrounded as he should be, by the greatest men in

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

the state, all of whom have come to Alton House to ask his counsel.”

At that moment Alton House, a blaze of light, broke into view. It was a stately mansion built in the best architectural manner of a century before. Standing in a ten-acre grove of sky-scraping forest pines, it rose only to the height of two stories, with high pitched red tile covered roofs giving opportunity for spacious attics above the sleeping rooms. It was solidly built of English brick, with walls more than two feet in thickness to the eaves, whence extended a broad, almost flat, piazza roof covering at once the balconies of the second floor and the piazza, beneath, full thirty feet wide, the whole carrying with it suggested memories of greetings between gallant lovers below and maiden mistresses in the balconies above. It is true, as Longfellow has written, that “All houses wherein men have lived and died are haunted houses”—haunted by memories of human life, of human joy and suffering, and, better than all, of human and humanizing love. Old family dwellings are not mere piles of bricks and mortar and beams without, and exhibition galleries of decorative art within, as is the rich speculator’s new palace; they are human homes ivy-grown

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

with memories, moss-covered with traditions. So it was with Alton House. Built in the very earliest days of Carolina settlement, it had been for generations not only the home of a distinguished and cultivated family, but the seat of a hospitality princely in its lavishness, and very loving in its inspiration. The old house had been the scene of many a revel, and better still of many a gentle love-making. It had sent out its sons to war, or to the cares of state, or to other strenuous endeavor, and its daughters to become the honored heads of other stately homes, the wives of gallant gentlemen, the mothers of sons deserving of all the honors that life could bring to them. So large had been the part played in Carolina by the men and women of the Alton race, and so mingled had their blood become with that of other Carolinian families of repute, that it had grown into a familiar saying that "It is only going home when one goes to Alton House."

It was a mansion of generous proportions. Its great rooms were oak wainscotted to the ceiling, and wholly unspotted with paint. Its floors of long-leaf yellow pine had grown glass-like under the daily polishing of generations. Its heavy mahogany furniture was built with a solidity in keeping with the sturdy walls that

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

enclosed it, and it had grown nearly black with age and jealous waxing.

The glory of the house was its great hallway, with its two broad fireplaces and the noble staircase with its midway landing so broad that minuets had been danced upon it as a pretty spectacle for those below to contemplate. In the drawing room there were wax candles in sconces, and a great central oil lamp of many branching burners, but in the hall as in the dining-room the illumination was by flaring, fatwood torches, held in place by great wrought iron sockets with swinging spark receivers below, and ebony young negroes to attend them. The dining room extended to the roof with heavy carved timbers for its upper structure, and a multitude of old portraits hung between and below the torch holders. These represented many generations of Altons, at all ages from childhood onward, and many of them had been brought from England by the pioneer Alton who had come out as a person of title and rank and high authority under the absurd constitutions of Clarendon which John Locke wrought out for the government of a wilderness concerning the conditions of which his ignorance was almost picturesquely phenomenal. That was more than a hundred years before the time

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

we are now considering and with each succeeding generation of Altons new honors had come to the family name, honors of war, of peace, of scholarship and of high endeavor in every undertaking.

IX

JACK

“**H**OW big and strong and handsome you are!” was Jacqueline’s greeting to her brother when he entered her rooms for the promised *tête-à-tête* supper. The young man had donned his brass buttoned blue coat, whose white satin lining was a trifle the worse for wear, a pair of close fitting knee breeches, long stockings, low shoes with silver buckles, and a cambric shirt ruffled at the bosom and wrists. Disdaining the dandyism of eel-skin forelocks, he had parted his hair in the middle—for the fashion of side parting had not yet come into vogue among gentlemen—and brushed it back simply over his ears, tying it at the back of his neck with a bit of ribbon.

“You’re superb, Roger, and you’ll make a splendid soldier!”

“I hope so, dear,” he replied; “but when your tailor comes to-morrow, he must subdue

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

his ideas sufficiently to dress me as a soldier and not in fine gentleman's togs like these. I have a mind for thick blue jeans, and stout leather boots. Perhaps you won't like my appearance so well when I get myself up as a real soldier."

"Oh yes I will. Mr. Snip, or whatever his name is, can't trim off your great legs or shorten your arms or do anything else to mar your superb physical proportions, and if he doesn't make your new garments fit you properly, I'll awaken his conscience to a degree that will astonish him. You don't know how I can criticise and scold about clothes, Roger. I've had seven years' practice on my seamstresses since you went away, and of course I'm not afraid of a tailor."

"The exercise of your talents in that direction has certainly not been in vain," said Roger, taking her by the elbows and holding her at arm's length, the better to contemplate the costume she had assumed while he had been dressing. "You are a work of art, Jack, and all the better because your gown is two years behind the fashion. I saw just such gowns in London two years ago, but never so charming a woman in one of them."

"Is it truth you speak, Roger?" asked the girl with a note of real anxiety in her voice.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“ My name is Alton, Jack, I never tell lies, even to please a woman.”

“ But you’ve seen countesses, Roger, in all their glory!”

“ Yes, and duchesses, too, and some of them are very fat and coarse and their gowns often look as if they were made for somebody else, with a shape quite other than their own. Remember, Jack, that you’re a little republican, entitled to hold your head as high as any duchess or princess in the world. There are no women in England to compare with our Carolina maids and matrons, in beauty, intelligence or the charm of high breeding. You, or—or any Carolina girl of your class”—Roger meant Helen Vargave of course but he didn’t say so—“ need yield no hair’s breadth to the charms of any woman in all England.”

“ Then you haven’t come home in love, Roger? I’m gladder than I can tell you.”

Roger blushed crimson, and Jack’s eyes were quick to discern such signal flags.

“ Who is she, and what is she like, Roger? ” she asked quickly. “ Tell me all about her.” There was an almost pained eagerness in the girl’s voice, and a saddened look in her eyes as she conjured up visions of some coming sister-in-law whom she was predetermined to detest,

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

but who, she foresaw, would have the right as well as the power to divide Roger's affection and take to herself the greater share. She imagined some English bride coming to Alton House to rule there in her stead, and bringing with her great trunkfuls of gowns two years later in style than her own. The little woman was instantly and almost insanely jealous. So it was in a hard, metallic voice that she repeated her demand—"Tell me all about her!"

Roger, being a man, was clumsy in his perceptions, as women reckon such things, yet he perceived enough of what was in his sister's thought to amuse him, and he had a mind to tease her a little.

"Well, she's about your size, Jack,—or perhaps in inch or so taller, and she knows how to ride—"

"Don't trifle, Roger, tell me," broke in the girl, with hardness still in her tone. "When is she coming here to turn me out of Alton House?"

"Never, dear, never," said the young man, at last realizing how much of suffering his sister was enduring. "Helen Vargave will never wish, even as my wife, to replace you here until you abdicate of your own free will to assume the high position of wife to some

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

man worthy of you and mistress of some mansion that shall be even more your own than Alton House has been for all these years."

The girl threw herself into her brother's arms, in a torrent of glad tears.

"Oh, Roger! why didn't you say it was just Helen? I thought, oh, such horrible things! Oh, Roger, Roger, Roger! I am so happy!"

Just then a servant bearing the supper entered, and Jacqueline dried her tears. As they sat at meat she said:

"When did it all happen, Roger? Why don't you begin at the beginning and tell me all about it? A man is *so* provoking."

"But, dear, how can I 'tell you all about it?' Don't you think that that is Helen's privilege?"

"Yes, of course, but I don't like to wait. When is it to be, Roger?"

"I don't know, Jack. Mrs. Vargave seems to think it can never be at all."

"Never can be? But why not? Of all marriages that could be suggested none could be fitter. What do you mean, Roger?"

"I don't know what I mean, Jack. But when I spoke of this to Helen's mother she seemed distressed, and she suggested that our father might not approve. I thought at first that it

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

was only her way of manifesting proper reserve, but it wasn't that, Jack, as I soon learned. She really expects father to object, though why, I cannot conjecture."

"Roger!" said Jack, after a pause, "I believe Mrs. Vargave is right. She isn't a woman to imagine things. She knows something—I can't imagine what—but she knows something or she simply could not have suggested an objection on father's part. I wonder what it can be?"

Roger did not answer. He was wondering also. Presently Jack laid down the spoon with which she was taking some fruit, and looking up with intense earnestness, said:

"Of course, you'll marry her anyhow, Roger?"

"I'll marry her or nobody, and she alone can make it nobody."

"That's right, brother! That's the soldier in you—in other words it's the manhood. There can be no earthly reason why you shouldn't marry Helen. She is the noblest, worthiest, dearest girl in the world. She's the only woman alive that I would welcome here as mistress and make into a real sister. If father makes an objection—well, I won't believe it. But, anyhow, if you are half the man I take my

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

brother to be, you will marry the woman you love if all the demons stand in the way. Roger promise me!"

"I have already said it, Jack."

"But say it again! say it again! I simply will not have this thing left in doubt."

"It is in no doubt, Jack, dear. I say it again to please you, though there is no necessity. I not only say it, but I swear on my honor that I will marry Helen Vargave or I will marry no one so long as I live, and I swear that nobody's objection except her own shall ever stand in my way."

After a minute he added:

"Don't let's indulge in heroics, Jack. No one is going to interfere with an arrangement so eminently right and fit. Father will feel it the proudest moment of his life when he asks Mrs. Vargave for Helen's hand as the wife of his only son. He will welcome her as a daughter as eagerly as you will greet her as your sister. So let's dismiss the matter as settled. And let's go now to the drawing-room."

"Not till your arrival is announced, brother, dear. You know father's sensitiveness as to formalities. Most people are laying them aside in these revolutionary days, but that only makes

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

father the more insistent upon them. 'Imagine anybody slapping General Washington on the back,' he said one day. 'I'll summon a servant to announce you.'

"Let it be Marlborough then," said Roger. "You've trained him superbly, Jack."

"That's what I had planned. He's waiting at the foot of the stairs." Then going to the door she called the man and he quickly responded. He had meantime changed his attire to that of a footman, with a velvet coat and a sunburst of ruffled shirt front which blazed all the whiter for the contrast with the polished ebony of his face. He stood full six feet high, with broad chest and brawny limbs, a man as proud of his service as any soldier in his uniform ever was. He did not feel himself a slave. He was a stalwart, duty-loving, self-respecting *man*—proud of his faithfulness to his clan, devoted to the house to which he belonged, and quite ready to prove himself worthy of its traditions by any deed of humble service or gallant derring-do that fortune, good or bad, might assign to him as his portion.

With head erect and shoulders thrown back, and with his grammar well in hand, he preceded the brother and sister down the stairs and across the hall. Then, standing in the drawing-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

room door he announced his guests in a formula of his own devising which he had spent an hour in shaping to his fancy :

“ Master, and gentlemen ! ” he called, “ I have the honor of announcing the approach of my mistress, Miss Alton, and of her brother, Colonel Roger Alton, just returned from England. ”

When asked afterwards why he had bestowed the title of Colonel upon Roger, Marlborough was ready with the reply :

“ Why, Mis’ Jacqueline, he’s big, he’s strong, he knows how to carry himself, and he’s the next heir to Alton House. Doesn’t that make him a Colonel ? ”

X

MEN *in* COUNCIL

UPON entering the great drawing-room, Roger's first care was to present himself to his father, who sat in a large cushioned armchair, with a bandaged foot resting upon a stool in front and with unmistakable lines of pain in his countenance.

"Welcome, my son," was the father's greeting. "Welcome and congratulations. You have grown into a sturdy manhood and are more than fit to take up the task of representing our race in the difficult struggle that lies before us."

"Then you do not condemn me, father, for doing my duty without waiting for your permission?"

"I expected no less than that at your hands. When you came to man's estate I was sure you would do your man's part. It was not for me to command or even to suggest. I wondered how you would manage to get here, but I had at no time any doubt that you would come."

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“ You make me very happy, father, by your approval. My only regret is that I find you suffering so severely.”

“ It’s a trifle, boy, except that it makes me worthless when Carolina most needs me. But enough of that; we have guests, to whom I wish to present you.” Then turning to the gentlemen who had finished their obeisances to Jacqueline, he said:

“ Gentlemen, I beg to present to you my son, Roger, who has just come home, as you have already heard, to take up such duty to the country as may fall to our house. Jacqueline, dear, will you introduce your brother to the gentlemen individually? ”

The company was indeed a distinguished one, as Jacqueline had said. First of all was John Rutledge, by universal consent, then and afterwards, the foremost Carolinian alive. Scarcely forty years of age, he had already had a career of distinguished public service, and was destined to be the inspiring genius of that unconquerable resistance to superior force, which kept the revolution alive in Carolina throughout all the dark days during which the state was overrun by Cornwallis’s merciless hordes, scourged by the faith-breaking, treacherous cutthroat Tarleton and his legion of

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

drilled and disciplined savages,* and subjected to the torch of tory incendiaries.

Rutledge was a man born to patriotic service and wonderfully gifted in rendering it. He was a mere youth of twenty-six when Carolina sent him, at his own expense, as her representative in the Stamp Act Congress of 1765, at New York. At thirty-five he was a member of the South Carolina Convention and a delegate to the Continental Congress at Philadelphia. After two years more of continuous public service he was made chairman of the committee that prepared South Carolina's first constitution as an independent state, and upon the adoption of that constitution he was chosen to be first president of the new government. It

* If this characterization of Tarleton and his men seems extravagant to any reader, I commend him to a study of the simple facts of history. Mastery of them cannot leave in any honest mind other impression than that even the blackness of British conquest has never produced a leader so brutal, so treacherous, so utterly regardless of the scant amenities of war as Lieutenant-Colonel Bannistre Tarleton, whose betrayals of truces, whose massacres of surrendered men, whose refusal of quarter to enemies overcome, made his name a by-word in the Carolinas and a stench in the nostrils of all brave soldiers in every quarter of the world. There is no blacker page in all history, savage or civilized, than that which records the infamy of this royally commissioned assassin.—*Author.*

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

was he who overbore the counsels of Gen. Charles Lee and ordered and mightily aided the defence instead of the surrender of Fort Moultrie, with a result that is still reckoned among the famous feats of American arms. And now, at barely forty years of age, in view of the most threatening situation that Carolina had ever known, he had been chosen by unanimous consent to be, for the second time, governor of the state, and the legislature had clothed him with almost dictatorial powers, which it afterward made absolute as a measure of commanding necessity to the public safety.

John Rutledge was thus for years the autocrat of South Carolina, made so for her salvation, by the universal voice of his countrymen. Not even the confidence of Congress in Washington, was more implicit than was that of the Carolinians in John Rutledge. Nor was the one confidence better deserved or more honored in its outcome than the other.

Gov. Rutledge was a man of large frame, great muscularity and perfect physical health. His energy was inexhaustible, his wits keen, his intellect almost preternaturally active, and his courage absolutely dauntless. He talked rapidly and with force. He thought clearly and he had full confidence in the soundness of his

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

thinking, as had been shown when he sent Moultrie 500 pounds of powder and ordered him not to evacuate the fort under his command in obedience to the commanding general's orders, but to hold it till he, Rutledge, should give orders for its abandonment—a course that resulted not only in a notable victory but also in the holding of the Carolinas during years when their conquest would have been, perhaps, the death knell of Washington's difficult defence at the north, and with it, in all probability, the inglorious end of the struggle for American independence.

But strong-willed, courageous and self-reliant as Rutledge was, he was wise enough to seek counsel wherever judicious counsel was to be found. Hence his presence at Alton House. For, physically unfit for service as Col. Geoffrey Alton was by reason of his advancing age, his gout, and, more than all, his wounds received in the Indian wars, Gov. Rutledge knew and trusted Col. Alton's wisdom as a soldier and a statesman, and was eager, under his new and fearful load of responsibility, to consult with one so wise, so devoted, and so largely experienced.

He had come to Alton House upon this mission, and he had summoned to meet him there

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

some others to whom he looked for active aid in his difficult task of Carolina's defence.

Among these was Francis Marion, a man of few words, but mighty in action and already distinguished in war and in statesmanship. Roger saw in him a man stockily built, with legs much too short for his body and suggesting anything but the cavalier that he afterwards became, with a badly formed, aquiline nose, but with a resolutely closed mouth, muscles of obtrusive development, and eyes that might melt into tenderness in converse with a woman, or flame into danger signals in conflict with an enemy.

Marion was still several years short of his half century of age. Yet he seemed a man accustomed to command, and, better still, to the cheerful assumption of responsibility. As he looked the silent man in the eyes, Roger remembered that he had been a private soldier at twenty-seven, in the Cherokee wars; that for three years he had rendered notable service in that humble capacity; that in the battle of Etchoee he had volunteered to lead a forlorn hope in an enterprise so desperate that scarcely any one of the party but himself survived the assault; that after service in the provincial congress, he had been made a captain under Moul-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

trie; that he had been a leader in the force that captured the British fort Johnson and turned its guns upon the enemy's ships in the harbor with such destructive effect as to drive every one of them out to the inhospitable sea; that one after another, important fortresses had been placed under his command; and that when a powerful fleet had assailed the half-finished fort on Sullivan's Island, it was this man Marion whom Moultrie summoned to aid him in that celebrated defence in which he utterly defeated an enemy superior in every resource and every appliance of war. Marion was now in supreme command of Charles Town's chief defensive work, Fort Moultrie, and Rutledge held him in esteem as the man of all others upon whose fortitude and discretion and whose "vast and varied fighting capacity," to use his own words, he could confidently rely.

There was young Horry present also, a man yet unknown to fame, but destined later to win great renown in partisan war, for his daring and his singular command of men. He was a very bad horseman, and to the end he never learned to ride, yet he chose the career of a cavalier as his own, and, in spite of many tumbles from the saddle in action, made his name famous as a rough rider.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

In like manner, Marion, who could not swim, always avoided bridges and by forcing his horses to swim rivers, accomplished many surprises that would otherwise have been impracticable.

There were others in that company, too, but Rutledge was the soul of it. Full of energy to overflowing, inspired by an enthusiasm that was irresistibly contagious, and possessed of conversational gifts of the rarest attractiveness—an inheritance from his Irish ancestry—he talked much and so effectively as to draw from each of his hearers all that was best and most suggestive in his mind.

“Lincoln cannot long hold the British in Georgia,” he explained. “He is a brilliant commander and a tireless one, but his army is utterly inadequate to the task that has been set for it.

“Prevost is constantly growing stronger by reinforcements from Florida, and I look presently to see heavy battalions brought to his assistance from the north. Within a month or two at most, he will overrun our low country, and knock at the gates of Charles Town. We shall do our best to beat him off, and I think we shall succeed, for Charles Town is admirably situated for defence, and I shall use the extraor-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

dinary powers entrusted to me, to put all the available men in the state into service; but sooner or later, in all probability this British assault upon the south will succeed. Charles Town will fall as Savannah has already done. But we must not let that discourage us. We must remember that our enemy has been master of Boston—before Washington drove him out—of New York, which he still holds, of Philadelphia which he has been forced to evacuate, of the Jerseys till Washington made that country a British and Hessian graveyard, and of pretty nearly every other point of strategic importance at the north, and yet to-day he is no stronger there than when the war began. He is weaker in fact. Burgoyne's magnificently planned campaign for conquering the Hudson river country and cutting New England off from the rest of the republic, ended in the surrender of the finest army that our enemy has ever been able to put into the field against us. After four years of war the north is as completely unconquered now as it was when the war began. The enemy is shut up in garrison towns, and he turns now to the south in the hope of finding here an easier task. In Virginia all his campaigns have achieved nothing more important than the robbery of some hen-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

roosts and pig-pens and the burning of a few barns. Here at the south we have yet to see what he can do to repair his former failures at Charles Town; but he has taken Savannah as a secure base of operations and now that his efforts are manifestly to be concentrated here, he will probably take all our cities just as he has done at the north. It is for us to make their capture as costly as possible to him, and when they are captured, to teach him, as Washington and Greene and Stark and Gates have taught him at the north, that the war goes on without regard to what they call strategic positions. In a country like ours there are no strategic positions, or none at any rate the control of which can render an enemy our master, if we are brave and resolute. Dogged determination means more for us than regiments and batteries."

"Your idea then is that we can keep up the war no matter how completely the coigns of vantage may be in the enemy's hands, and no matter how great an army he may bring against us?" said young Horry.

"Precisely. We can calculate how many British troops it will require to capture and hold Charles Town, and Camden and the rest. But who can reckon how many it will take to

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

conquer the woods and swamps that lie between? These, and not the cities, are our strongholds. If we are brave and determined and active, the capture of our cities and towns will mark only the beginning of war, and just as the enemy imagines his task done he will find out that its difficulties are only beginning. Mr. Alton, the younger, is fresh from Oxford and well up in his classics. He doubtless remembers the story—I forget the names and the details—of that old backwoods King who had a little talk with the Romans when they imagined that they had conquered his country and were ready to receive his submission. ‘Bring hither a dried bull’s hide,’ he said to his attendants. When the hide came he ordered one of his men to stand on a certain spot. ‘There!’ he cried. ‘That spot is down. Now stand on this other one where the hide is well up from the ground. Now that is down, but you observe that the other one popped up again as soon as the fellow stepped off it to hold this new place down. So it will be with my dominions. You may trample any part of them to the earth, but the moment you withdraw from the conquered part to repress some other, the first will spring up again as high as ever. If you expect to hold us in subjection you must bring

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

men enough to cover the whole bull's hide at once, and you haven't got men enough for that.' That old Dutchman's lesson is the one we've got to teach the British. We'll defend Charles Town as long as we can. We'll meet armies with armies whenever it is possible to do so. And when that ceases to be possible we'll begin the war in earnest, making every tree a picket post, every woodpile a masked battery, every swamp a fortress and a seat of incessant offence."

"But what of the tories, Governor Rutledge?" asked Roger.

"Yes, I hear that you have already encountered one of them. I congratulate you. Such young men as you may be trusted to keep them in awe until the British swarm over the country. Then they will be troublesome, of course. But at any rate they must then declare themselves, and we shall know how to deal with them. If they turn out to fight us as soldiers, we shall meet them and treat them as such. If they skulk and hide and stab us in the back, and set fire to our barns, why we'll simply hang them as fast as we can catch them. Fortunately we have the means of putting them to the proof. Whenever the British make a serious advance into South Carolina, I shall order out the entire

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

body of the militia under the authority conferred upon me for this emergency. Confiscation of property, personal arrest and yawning jails await those who refuse to respond, while acts of treason—well, you know death by hanging is, all the world over, the punishment for such crimes. At present we do not know who is a friend or who an enemy; who a patriot and who a traitor to his native land. But when the call comes for men to meet an invading enemy we shall know. Then every man must take one side or the other, or fall into the worst sort of difficulties between the lines.”

“It seems to me a special pity,” said Col. Alton, in his grave, deliberate way, “that we cannot organize the militia now, in advance of the need of embodying it. In my small experience I have observed that the greatest source of danger in confronting an enemy with raw levies is the lack of a habit on the part of the men, of waiting for orders and obeying them, when they are given. More properly, perhaps, I should say that militiamen, hastily embodied, are too much disposed to take orders from persons not entitled to issue them, and all for lack of the soldierly habit. The men are individually brave, but collectively they are apt to run away if any timid one among them sets the

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

example. Have you not observed that, Col. Marion?"

"Often," answered the silent man, and he added not another word to his answer.

"But what remedy is available?" asked Rutledge, who was always on the alert for helpful suggestions. "You know our militia cannot be brought into camps or kept there when no enemy threatens. They feel the necessity of being at home to cultivate and harvest their crops, when not needed in actual service, and in spite of all laws and orders to the contrary they quit camp and go home the moment the enemy retires or settles himself into inactivity. I know a Scotch-Irish Presbyterian preacher up in the mountains who once said to me—'I can put every man and boy in my congregation into the field whenever I suspend services to tell them that the British are coming; but I can't keep a manjack of them there for a single day after the menace has passed away. They are ready enough to shoot and be shot, but their instinct of industry revolts against the idleness of camp life, and their love of home is a passion.' I think the preacher was right," continued the governor, "and a Catholic priest in Georgetown said much the same thing to me, wittily adding 'my lads are always ready to

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

fight soldiers for liberty but they don't want to fight windmills for her. A battle, they understand; but a sham battle seems to them foolishness.' ”

“How would it do,” suggested Roger with much diffidence, “to institute very small and compact local organizations of militia, not as militia, but as patriots organizing and drilling themselves in order that their service may be the more effective when the need of it arises?”

“Would you mind explaining your idea a little more fully?” asked Rutledge. “It impresses me as one that may be worth trying.”

“Well,” said Roger, with some hesitation, “my idea is simply the outcome of the thinking I have done concerning my own service. I could remain simply a militiaman, subject to your call, Governor, but it has seemed to me that I might render a much greater service by gathering together the overseers on the Alton plantations and their boys, and the carpenters and wheelwrights and blacksmiths in the neighborhood, and the best of the negroes, and organizing and drilling them for service. Then there would be a little company here as compact and as well accustomed to obey orders as any that a camp of instruction could turn out. If somebody in every neighborhood were encouraged

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

to do the same thing, it has seemed to me that we might make your militia, Gov. Rutledge, as effective in a little while, as the Continentals themselves. Only it would be necessary to make the service of these volunteers a matter of obligation, after they had once enlisted in it, and to clothe their commanders with adequate authority. I suppose that would require some sort of legislation."

"I think not," answered Marion. "The powers entrusted to Gov. Rutledge might enable him to dispense with a statute."

"You are right, Col. Marion. I have ample authority to authorize this sort of organization wherever it is practicable, and to commission commanders for the purpose. But unhappily we have few men anywhere disposed to undertake such a task, as Mr. Roger Alton is—let me say Captain Roger Alton rather, as I purpose on my return to Charles Town, to issue to you, Mr. Alton, a commission as captain for the carrying out of your idea. Your commission will date from to-day, and you may begin your work of organization as soon as you please. Your requisitions for uniforms, arms, ammunition and all the rest of it, will be honored at Charles Town, Captain."

"Pardon me, Governor, will you not add one

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

privilege to your generous gifts? Will you not let me carry out my full purpose, which is to uniform, arm, equip and maintain my little company at my own expense? My good sister here," turning to Jacqueline and lovingly taking her hand, "has so wisely administered my inheritance in my absence, that I have money sufficient for this purpose, while, before our liberties are secured, the state is likely to be sore beset to meet the demands upon its treasury. Will you not let me make the maintenance of my little local company a personal charge upon my own resources?"

Gov. Rutledge rose from his chair and grasped the young man's hand. He was almost in tears, so intensely did he feel in every matter that concerned his stupendous task of defence. He looked Roger in the eyes for a moment, and then said, "God bless you, boy!"

Then he turned to Jacqueline and almost stared at her. Presently he said—"and it is you, my dear young lady, that have made this possible!" Then he leaned forward and kissed her reverently on the forehead.

"In the name of South Carolina and of the United States of America," he said, "in the name of human liberty, girl, I lovingly salute you!"

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

The Irish blood in his veins had mastered him, but Jacqueline was equal to the occasion.

“I salute Carolina!” she cried, with head thrown back and eyes ablaze, “I salute the United States! I salute liberty! Am I not their daughter? To you strong men it is given to dare and to do! To us weak women it is given only to inspire. Gentlemen, I bid you good-night, and I say to you, for all the women of Carolina—we love you because you are strong and brave and true, we honor you because you are patriots. Good night, good gentlemen!”

As she ended her speech she made a low courtesy in the doorway, and an instant later she had gone.

“Men and brethren!” exclaimed young Horry, “there spoke our noble womankind. They love liberty with a passion greater than any of which we are capable. If we are men half worthy of them we shall all be in well-earned graves before their hope for their native land is disappointed.” Then seizing the decanter, he poured bumpers of Madeira for all present, and offered the toast—

“The women of Carolina—to them we pledge ourselves for Independence, if it be in human power to achieve it, and if not, then for

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

honorable death to ourselves, and graves fit for the watering of their tears!"

Does it all sound overwrought and hysterical, oh, safely-housed reader of to-day, to whom the nationality that such men, inspired by such women, won for you, is a commonplace? Remember for what stakes they played! Remember how tremendous the issue was! Remember how much you owe to the fact that they were hot-blooded men and women, capable of high enthusiasms and of such self-sacrifice as our more calculating generation, to its sore discredit, scorns as romantic and absurd! And read history a little for the enlightenment of your mind and the illumination of your soul! Learn from human records how great a force enthusiasm is, how large a part romance has played in working out humanity's most vital problems! Learn to love and admire, where now you coldly criticise in self-sufficient scorn. Try to understand what stuff heroes and heroines are made of, and how much worthier that stuff is than all the virtues of our commercial age can ever be!

XI

A love and life PERPLEXITY

WHEN young Barnegal, at Torrance's Tavern announced his purpose of riding half way to Alton House with Roger, he had another reason for the intention besides his desire to be for a time in company with his old schoolfellow. On the way he confided that reason to his companion.

“You know, Roger,” he said, “how fond I was of Jacqueline and she of me when she and you and I were playmates at Alton House. You remember how, when you and I fell under the displeasure of our tutor, she always came to the rescue either by wheedling or by terrifying the old fellow—for the little maid was quite equal to either undertaking with her winning ways and her capacity for haughty imperiousness. Well, it was a sort of brother love I felt for her then. But as we both grew older it ripened into a much deeper passion, and now

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

Jacqueline has consented to be my affianced bride as soon as the necessary formalities between the two families have been fulfilled."

Roger reined in his horse and grasped his companion's hand.

"I am so glad, old fellow, so glad! No more joyous news could come to me than this, to greet me on my return. But why not complete the formalities at once? Why not ride with me to Alton House to-day, and ask my father for the consent that he will be more than ready to give?"

"You forget my uncle," answered Barnegal.

"Oh, Tiger Bill? But you wrote me in England that you and he were no longer on terms—that you had parted finally after a great quarrel. Have you since become reconciled?"

"Not in the least. When I came of age two years ago my uncle sent for me and closed the guardianship he had so long exercised, by turning over to me the estate left me by my father, and almost flinging in my face the documents that testified to the scrupulous fidelity to every legal requirement with which he had discharged the trust. I felt a little tenderly toward the lonely old man, and sought to make the parting pleasant; but he would not have it so. When I spoke of the fidelity of his guard-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

ianship and thanked him for it he fell into a rage, shook his clenched fists at me and answered: 'So you expected it to be otherwise did you? You thought me a thief who had been robbing you all these years, and now that you can pick no flaw in my accounts you are surprised to find that I have stolen nothing, and you impudently tell me so to my face!' It was useless to protest that my words bore no such meaning. He was in one of his savage tempers when to have said anything, even in kindness, would only have excited him further. He was an old or at least an elderly man and my nearest, indeed, my only kinsman, so far as I know, on earth. I could not quarrel with him, so I turned on my heel and left him. Since then we have held no communication; but to-day, when we reach the entrance to his plantation, I am going to him to demand that, as the head of our family, he shall ask your father for Jacqueline's hand for me."

"You are an idiot, Charlie!" exclaimed Roger, lapsing into the familiarity of boyhood. "You know your uncle will refuse."

"Of course he will. If I proposed that he should ask for the hand of some woman who would make life a torture to me he would do it

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

with a positively insane joy. But when I suggest Jacqueline to him he will fly into a rage and probably order me out of his house."

"Then why in the name of common sense do you go to him at all?"

"Because I must. Jacqueline herself demands it. I proposed to ignore my uncle altogether, and go to your father as myself the head of my own branch of the family. But she vetoed that at once. 'Your uncle is a very unlovely and unreasonable person,' she said, 'and I understand that for some reason which you know nothing about, he chooses to hate you with extraordinary malice. But he is still the head of the Barnegal house, and while he lives, I cannot marry you without his consent. It may break my heart, and yours too, worse luck, but as a daughter of Alton House I will never enter any family against the will of its head.' So you see, Roger, I must go to my uncle."

"I don't see anything of the kind. By his evil temper your uncle has made himself an Ishmael in Carolina. And you remember that Ishmael was not recognized as the head of his father's tribe. Your uncle has completely forfeited all claim to recognition. It is society that assigns to a man the honor and authority of

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

family headship, and your uncle has affronted and contemned society. What right has he to claim rights and privileges at its hands? No, Charlie, you owe him no deference, and as for Jacqueline, I'll teach her the difference between a woman's proper pride, and a nonsensical sacrifice of her life and yours upon a whim like this. Come along with me to Alton House, and see how quickly I shall set things right."

"I must first fulfil her commands, Roger. After that—after my uncle shall have turned me out of his house, perhaps with insults for which I cannot call him to account as I should were he any other man in the world—after all that is ended, I will consider what is to be done."

"Very well. But promise me one thing. Promise me that you will at any rate come to Alton House within the week, and before you do anything or accept anything as finally determined!"

"I promise that. I am none too eager to let a man who hates me with unspeakable malice work ruin to my life. After I shall have honored him with a deference that he does not deserve, I will go at once home—for I haven't so much as an extra pocket handkerchief with me now—and within a very few days I will

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

journey to Alton House. There I will go to your father and claim the right to regard myself as the head of my own family, entitled to ask him for his daughter's hand. I shall thus satisfy every possible demand of social custom, and perhaps you will be able to persuade Jacqueline to see that I have done so. Her pride is all that I fear now as an obstacle."

By this time the pair had reached the point where their roads parted, and with warm adieus they separated, Roger to proceed on his journey, Barnegal to confront his evil tempered relative.

XII

TIGER BILL

ALTHOUGH it was only a little past mid-winter, the day was a good deal more than comfortably warm, and after his morning ride over his plantation, "Tiger Bill" Barnegal, as he was always called, passed through the low lying, broadly built, one-storied house, and, seating himself on the spacious veranda, rapped with his riding whip upon a table that stood there as if awaiting his command. To the servant who appeared in answer to his rapping, he spoke but the one word of command: "Snack!" The negro boy disappeared and a few minutes later came out again bearing a tray on which some cold dishes were arranged around a decanter of brandy that stood in the centre. Tiger Bill seized this latter the moment the tray was placed upon the table, and filling a small engraved wine glass with the spirits, drained it at a draught. Then filling

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

it again he held it up to the light and lovingly contemplated its rich amber sparkle before sipping it slowly and with relish. Not until he had finished and filled it again did he seem to have appetite for the dainty cold biscuits and the paper-thin slices of ham that constituted his "snack."

He was clad from head to foot in spotless white linen, as was his custom except in the coldest weather that the southern coast country knows. He was exquisitely groomed and shaven so smoothly as to leave no faintest suggestion of beard upon his face. His hair, as white even as his linen, was still thick upon his head, and he wore it, after the fashion of the time, brushed smoothly back without a part, and done into a queue behind.

"Shoes!" he said to the servant who stood behind him, and that attentive person quickly removed his master's riding boots and stockings, and setting a foot-tub of cold water before him, proceeded to bathe his feet. When he had carefully adjusted fresh hose to his master's legs and placed a pair of low cut, silver-buckled shoes upon his feet, the negro retired without further orders and the planter resumed his leisurely but close attention to the decanter. The serving-man knew that he would sit there

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

sipping brandy till the four o'clock dinner hour, if he were not interrupted, as was exceedingly unlikely.

For Tiger Bill Barnegal had no white inmate in his house, and it was not his custom to receive visitors. This man, always of violent temper, had quarrelled with the world a quarter of a century before, and from that time to this had held as little intercourse with his fellow-men as the exigencies of his affairs would permit. Two or three times a year he wrote a business letter to his factor in Charles Town. He received in the veranda the sailormen who managed his little fleet of coasting craft, when they came up the creek to the plantation to receive freight or orders. He went to court four times a year to attend to affairs that might be most conveniently arranged at that general meeting-place of men, and still more to watch the course of the multifarious litigation in which he was constantly engaged. For he always had lawsuits pending, most of them frivolous in character and cantankerous in their origin. In brief, he was a man at war with humankind. He had well earned his sobriquet of "Tiger Bill."

But he was destined on this afternoon to be interrupted in that brandy sipping which, in-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

dulged in daily for many years, had inflamed his complexion as much as his temper. He had scarcely settled himself comfortably, indeed, before his nephew rode up and, dismounting, entered the high hung veranda.

Tiger Bill rose and advanced to meet the younger Barnegal, but with no suggestion of welcome in his mien.

“ May I ask to what I am indebted for this visit? I assure you it is quite unexpected.”

“ I know that very well, uncle, and I have not willingly intruded upon you. I come solely upon a matter of imperative business. If you will permit me I will state the matter as briefly as possible, and will then relieve you of a presence which I know to be unwelcome.”

“ Does the imperative business of which you speak, concern me in any way? ” asked the elder man, still putting a cynical sneer into every word by the tone and manner in which he spoke it.

“ Yes, sir, it concerns you as the head of our family. I have come to ask your approval of a marriage that I have in contemplation.”

“ Ah! indeed. Marriage is always an interesting subject. Most human follies are so. But in order to give the matter the undivided

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

attention that its possibilities of good—or evil—deserve, we need to discuss it calmly and in comfortable postures. We will be seated, if you please.”

With that, he brought the stock of his riding-whip down upon the table with a violence that made the glasses jingle and warned the black man in the neighboring dining-room not to tarry long before answering the familiar summons. The servitor appeared almost instantly and his master, waving his hand at the porch chairs that stood everywhere about, bade him “set out a chair for this gentleman’s use.”

There was so much of scorn and contempt in the cynical courtesy that young Barnegal’s first impulse was to decline the proffered seat, turn on his heel and quit the place at once. But he thought better of that and seated himself instead.

“Bring a glass for this gentleman’s use,” was the next command.

Young Barnegal, like all the men of his time, was accustomed to take a social glass upon occasion, particularly after a long journey on horseback. But so repugnant to him was the thought of eating or drinking under his uncle’s roof that he sought to decline the hospitality; but the elder man held to his purpose.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“ Surely you would not affront me by refusing to take a glass with me after your long ride.”

“ I meant no affront sir, I assure you, but—”

“ Very well then, fill your glass and permit me to propose the young gentlewoman’s health, whoever she may be. You have not yet favored me with her name,” he added when the glasses had been emptied.

“ Her name is Jacqueline Alton,” responded the young man. “ I think you will agree with me that she is a gentlewoman worthy to become the wife of any man in Carolina.”

“ You mean of course, though you are too polite to say so, that even so malignant an old cynic as you take me to be, could find nothing in Mistress Jacqueline Alton to criticise. Pardon me,” seeing that his nephew was about to interrupt, “ do not protest, please. My temper does not easily brook contradiction, even when it is meant to be polite. I do not happen to know the young gentlewoman you mention, in any personal way at least, and, therefore, it would be unreasonable presumption on my part to find fault with her. I have no doubt that she has all the virtues in the calendar, and quite all the charms that you most admire in women.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

But, as you know, it has been many years since I visited Geoffrey Alton, and naturally I know nothing of his daughter. Nevertheless, as I say, I have no doubt that the young lady is quite all that your imagination paints her. If so, I am so much the more pleased with your tidings that you are in love with her. I have from the first intended that you should come to that state of mind. It was to bring that about, far more than to give you the advantage of instruction at the hands of a notably accomplished tutor, that I sent you as a boy to Alton House for tuition. I wished you to grow up in that intimate boy and girl association with this very young lady, which so certainly leads to love when both its victims—pardon me, I mean both parties to the arrangement—grow up. Understanding this, you will understand that the tidings you bring me of the accomplishment of my long cherished purpose, gives me the very greatest pleasure.”

The young man was astonished to the verge of speechlessness. But he managed to gasp out his thanks and to say :

“ Then, uncle, you will not object, as I feared you might, to standing for me in this matter? As the head of our family, you will ask Col. Alton for Jacqueline’s hand for me? ”

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“ I regret to see that you jump too readily at conclusions. I have been at lifelong enmity with Geoffrey Alton, and I cannot now go to him, craving a favor. But I will this day write him a letter. I will send it by a trusty servant, so that he shall receive it to-night or, early in the morning,—it is only a matter of twenty odd miles to Alton House. After to-morrow—after to-morrow, mind you—you will be free, with my full permission to go to him and yourself ask him for his daughter’s hand. Now, we will drink again to the young gentlewoman, and then I must ask you to leave me. You know I invite no one to dinner, and besides, I have a letter to write in your behalf.”

He filled the glasses, and, standing, proposed the toast—“ To the young woman in the case ! ” But he added nothing of good wishes for her. and the moment he set his glass down, he rapped violently for the servant and commanded: “ Bring this gentleman’s horse to the door.” Then, by way of adieu, he seated himself at the table, poured a glass of brandy for himself, held it up to the light, and making a slight inclination toward his nephew, said, “ I drink to your next visit to your always affectionate uncle.”

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

The young man mounted without recognizing either the seeming courtesy or the insult that it so thinly veiled. He rode away with his brain in a whirl of bewilderment. He had expected his uncle to fall into a rage at the announcement of his wish to marry Jacqueline Alton, and he had half unconsciously kept his fist doubled, ready to knock the old reprobate down the moment he should say any of the insulting things about Jacqueline which he expected him to say. But the older man had said none of them. On the contrary, he had professed delight in the fact that his nephew had fallen in love with the girl. And yet, and yet, and yet. From beginning to end of the conversation, the man's tone had been strongly marked with a contempt that might mean any conceivable or inconceivable malice.

"I wonder what he is going to put into that letter!" was the youth's final reflection as he rode out of his uncle's domain and into the public highway. "Well, at any rate he cannot now claim the right to interfere with my affairs. I have paid him the utmost tittle of my debt of deference, and he has himself bidden me go to Alton House on the day after to-morrow and ask Col. Alton for Jacqueline's hand. Going as I shall, with such a commission from the

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

head of my house, even Jacqueline's scruples can find no occasion for objecting to our engagement.

“But I wonder what the old Tiger will put into that letter!”

XIII

TIGER BILL'S *letter*

THE moment Charles Barnegal took his leave, Tiger Bill rapped for the servant, and when he came, said to him:

“Empty the brandy from that decanter. No, no,” seeing the servant entering the house, “empty it on the ground. Now send the decanter to be washed, and bring me another, with a clean glass.” With that he seized the two glasses that had been used, and dashed them violently against the foot of an iron drain-pipe, breaking them to bits. Then he ordered writing materials, and when they came he set himself down to write the letter of his life.

This is what he wrote:

“THE LIVE OAKS, 19th February, 1779.

“COL. GEOFFREY ALTON:

“Alton House,

“Sir:

“You may or may not be surprised at the receipt of this letter from me, or you may be annoyed, or you

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

may be neither. I do not in the least care with what emotion you receive it. It is at any rate with joy and gladness that I am writing it.

“My nephew Charles Barnegal, this day announced to me the fact that he loves your daughter. He came to me to ask that I, as the head of what remains of the Barnegal family, should go to you with a request for the hand of your daughter as his wife. I have declined to do so. I have told him, however, that I would write and send this letter, and that after its delivery he might go to you in his own proper person and prefer his suit. He will do so at once, without doubt, and you will understand that he does so with my full consent. So far as he is concerned, I fully and finally abdicate all right, title and interest in the headship of my family.

“But before you give your consent to this alliance, perhaps you will hear a little history, which, except for this communication to you, I shall keep to myself, as I have hitherto done, unless this marriage takes place. In that event I shall instantly make it public, although it will bring a sore dishonor upon my house and name. I have but a few years to live before the inordinate brandy-drinking in which I habitually indulge shall make an end of me, and, as you know, I have no children to inherit my name. As for my nephew, I would gladly leave to him and his descendants a heritage of shame if I might do so without blackening the reputation of my own house. As it is, I prefer to keep to myself the facts that I am about to relate to you, and I shall do so unless you compel me to make them public by permitting your daughter to become the wife of my nephew. In that event what I now write to you will be published broadcast throughout South Carolina.

“More than a quarter of a century ago I loved a woman with all that was best in my nature. You took her away from me and made her your wife. You were

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

a more attractive man than I was, in the eyes of women. You were tall, strong and unusually handsome. I was rather under the middle height and my hair was a brick dust red. You had received your education abroad and had traveled extensively in Europe—a fact that made you an interesting personage in every drawing room. I had no education except such as a Carolina schoolmaster could give me, and I had been nowhere out of the colony. You were familiar with shelvesful of learned books of which I did not know even the titles. More important still, you had won special honor by your deeds of daring in the Indian wars. In brief you had every advantage of me in the wooing of a woman whom we both loved, and you made full use of your advantage. When you married Jacqueline De Saussure, after whom I learn that your daughter is named, I became your enemy. I hated you with all the intensity of a nature which you doubtless would call weak, but concerning which I entertain an opposite opinion. I have so hated you ever since and I still hate you with unabated fervor. I mention this, lest you misconstrue my mood.

“But when the woman I loved became your wife, I sought to forget her. I went abroad with my brother, a chronic wanderer, and in France particularly I sought forgetfulness in dissipations to which my brother introduced me. In Paris I met and instantly loved Marie Garnier, the French woman who afterwards became my brother's wife and the mother of my nephew Charles Barnegal. My brother stole her from me by his superior fascinations just as you had before stolen Jacqueline De Saussure. To him French was as a mother tongue. To me it was a blinder riddle than a problem in Euclid. He was handsome—as you were. He was glib of tongue and possessed of a certain sparkling intelligence that charmed men and women alike. He was full of wit and self-possession, while I was awkward, easily

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

embarrassed and painfully self-conscious. What chance had I against such a rival? He asked for Marie Garnier's hand and, highly connected as she was, his suit was successful. He married her and brought her to Carolina, the more to wound and affront me. Her fortune was large, and with it he added to his estates until mine shrank into insignificance in comparison. He and the French woman became social leaders in the colony, while I retired to my plantation and my brandy bottle. I ought to have killed him, as I ought to have killed you. But I did neither. It was weakness on my part.

"It was not until after the death of both my brother and the French woman that I learned the facts I am about to relate. Had I known them sooner, I should have wreaked an exquisite revenge upon both by publishing the fact that the French woman was never my brother's wife. She lived and died in the belief that she was a married woman, entitled to carry a high head in Carolina. But that was only because I did not know what I afterwards learned. For I hated that French woman more even than I hate you. The fact to which I refer, was that my brother was already married when he took the French woman to be his wife. In the course of his wanderings he had drifted to Madrid and there married a woman immeasurably beneath him socially and intellectually, a woman beautiful, but ignorant, coarse and dissolute—a woman who did not know who her father was. After a brief time the woman left my brother or he left her—I do not know which and it does not matter. He returned to Paris and there, a year or two later married Marie Garnier as I have related.

"When I learned these facts after the death of my brother and his French woman, I planned to make their son, my nephew, the victim of an exquisite revenge which now nears its completion. I secured an appointment, as next of kin, to be guardian to the French wom-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

an's baseborn child. I sent him to your house to be tutored in company with your children, in order that he might grow up in intimacy with them and at last fall in love, as the phrase is, with your daughter. He has fulfilled his part of my purpose, and now my opportunity has come. I have told you that he is a man born out of wedlock. That is a crime that the society of Carolina never forgives. If I could do so without bringing shame upon my own name, I should blast my nephew's life once for all by making the truth everywhere known. As it is I prefer simply to tell it to you. That will answer my purpose quite as well. Knowing the facts you cannot permit your daughter to marry Charles Barnegal, for then your grandchildren would be the sons and daughters of a son of nobody, and the fact of their illegitimate origin would be perfectly known to every man and woman in Carolina. I should take care of that. But there will be no occasion for such activity on my part. You are not the man willingly to add a bar sinister to your family's escutcheon, and when you repulse the young man's suit for such a cause, I shall be revenged upon the dead in the person of their son.

"You will wonder perhaps that I did not assert the young man's illegitimacy long ago in proceedings to oust him from his inheritance; or rather you will not wonder, seeing that in that way I must have put a stain upon my own name—a thing that I have resolutely refused to do and shall refuse unless the impossible should come to pass in the marriage of your daughter to the French woman's son.

"You are at full liberty sir, to exhibit this letter to the young man as explaining your rejection of his suit, if it pleases you to do so. I shall send this by a trusty servant, in order that it may reach you to-night or early to-morrow. But I have arranged that you shall have full four and twenty hours in which to meditate upon

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

the matter before meeting the young man who calls himself Charles Barnegal.

“ I am sir, with unabated dislike,

“ Your enemy.

“ WILLIAM BARNEGAL.”

XIV

A stirrup CUP

TIGER BILL'S letter was delivered into Colonel Alton's hands about midnight while that gentleman was preparing himself for bed. It naturally produced a great deal of agitation in his mind. His first thought was to send for Colonel Marion and send a challenge to the writer of the insulting missive; but upon reading it over and over again, he saw clearly that there was nothing in it to which he could properly take exception. There was to him personally no insult, and no affront except that Tiger Bill had declared a hatred for him of which he was already fully aware.

After walking the floor for half the night, his mind became clear as to his duty. He saw that he must show the letter in its entirety to young Barnegal whenever that young gentleman should come to Alton House. Beyond that he could do nothing.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

Col. Alton got very little sleep that night, and in the morning he was unable to leave his bed. He sent a message through his son, excusing himself to his guests, and asking the younger man to preside in his stead at breakfast. After her custom, Jacqueline attended upon her father during the day so far as he would permit. But otherwise, no member of the family saw him until the following morning.

About noon of that second day, young Barnegal appeared, and asked for an interview in private with Colonel Alton. The two were closeted for an hour or more in the library, and when Barnegal reappeared, he was pale and haggard like one who had gone through long illness. He did not ask for Jacqueline, but sought out Roger instead. To him he said:

“Roger, old comrade, I am going away. I do not know when I shall return; indeed, I don't know that I shall ever return. I have first a duty to perform, however, in which, if mine enemy were other than he is, I should ask you to act for me.”

“Your enemy is your uncle? Against him I will act for you with great cheerfulness. Will you write to him now, or shall I join you at your own house?”

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“I will write to him now, but not here—not from this house—let us go to the nearest tavern.”

The young man spoke with difficulty, like one choking with rage. He seemed to force out his words, and he spoke as few of them as possible, so that during the ride almost nothing was said.

Arrived at the tavern young Barnegal sat down and wrote as follows:

“To WILLIAM BARNEGAL,
“At The Live Oaks.

“SIR: In a letter to Colonel Alton, which that gentleman has shown to me in accordance with your permission, you have slandered the memory of my dead mother. I need say nothing further to justify this note, which is written to demand of you the satisfaction I have a right to exact.

“My friend, Mr. Roger Alton, will bear this missive for me, and if you will refer him to the person whom you may select to act for you, the details of our meeting can be arranged without loss of time.

“Awaiting your answer through Mr. Alton, I am, Sir,
“CHARLES BARNEGAL.”

Roger took the note but before leaving, turned to young Barnegal and said:

“Charlie, old boy, is this necessary?”

“Absolutely. No power on earth could change my purpose. It could not be changed,

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

indeed, unless I were a coward and a sneak, unworthy to bear the name I do, or any other name that is respected among men. Go!"

That was all. Roger mounted his horse and rode away rapidly. Two hours later he rode up to the piazza of The Live Oaks where the elder Barnegal was sitting as before over his brandy bottle. He did not arise to receive his guest or even bid him dismount. He simply said:

"What do you want, sir?"

Roger flushed at the discourtesy, but put it aside in behalf of more serious matters.

"I bear this note to you, sir," he answered.

"From whom does it come, may I ask?"

"From your nephew, sir."

"Nephew? I have no nephew. The young man who claims to be such—well, never mind. I decline to recognize the existence of a nephew."

"Very well, then," said Roger. "Have it as you will. It comes from Charles Barnegal, and I am instructed to deliver it into your hands, or to any friend whom you may choose to act for you. In brief, sir, it is a challenge to mortal combat."

The old man, still without rising, rapped with his riding whip upon the table, and upon the servant's appearance bade him bring pen,

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

ink and paper. Upon reflection he determined, however, not to write, but to emphasize the insulting character of his reply by sending it verbally.

“ You can say to the young man,” he said to Roger, “ that I really cannot consent to recognize him as a gentleman by meeting him in personal warfare. There are reasons with which he is now familiar, and which he may possibly choose to confide to you but which I must not, —there are reasons, I say, why I cannot regard him as a gentleman, or a person in any way entitled to address a gentleman. Say that, please, and now good-morning.”

Roger’s strong impulse was to slap the old fellow’s jaws. He controlled himself, however, and said :

“ Whatever your opinion may be of Mr. Charles Barnegal, or of his standing in the community, I at least am known to you as a man entitled to be treated with ordinary courtesy. I decline, sir, to carry a verbal message from you to anybody. If you refuse to receive the note which I bear, and to answer it in writing, I shall myself take measures to avenge the insult you are trying to put upon me, and I assure you, sir, that in such case you will have to meet me whether you wish to do so or not.”

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

The menace was effective. The old man turned to his writing materials and wrote substantially what he had said verbally, addressed it and handed it to Roger, having first opened and spread out upon his table the challenge which that young man had brought to him.

When young Barnegal opened his uncle's note, he handed it to Roger to read.

"There!" he said. "I cannot tell you, though I perfectly know what he means when he says that I am not entitled to rank as a gentleman, or to address a challenge to a gentleman. I perfectly understand his excuse for refusing to meet me. I shall have no further use for your services in this matter, Roger. My uncle refuses to accept a challenge at my hands. I have no need of a second in what I am going to do."

Roger saw that there was no use in remonstrating. All that is demoniacal in human nature had been aroused in the young man's soul. Roger did not need to ask questions in order to learn what his friend's purpose was, but he determined instantly to ride with him. Young Barnegal objected, saying "It will compromise you, Roger. I am going to do something for which I cannot offer to the public any excuse whatever. Unfortunately, I cannot even state

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

to any human being the nature of the affront this man has put upon me. I cannot tell you the wrong he has done to the mother who bore me. I cannot tell you my reason for seeking revenge, but revenge I will have if I have to follow him to the ends of the earth. Go home, Roger, let me go alone."

Roger said nothing in the way of remonstrance, but at any rate he adhered to his purpose of going with his friend.

He said: "I will go with you, Charlie, whether you ask me or not. Whether you even permit it or not I am going with you."

And so they set out in silence on the return trip to The Live Oaks. They arrived there just before sunset. Young Barnegal leapt off his horse, and with his heavy riding whip in hand, approached his uncle who still sat in the piazza. Before the old man could even rise, he lashed him as one might lash a disobedient hound. Roger called to him presently.

"You have done enough, Charlie, you have done enough! Control yourself."

The young man paused, while the elder writhed in agony from the blows he had received across the face.

"I have not done enough until he goes down upon his knees and begs my pardon for his



The Interview with Tiger Bill.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

insults to my mother's memory. Down on your knees, sir, down on your knees!" And with that he lashed him again and again. It was only when Roger dragged the impassioned youth away by force that he desisted.

The old man was by this time beyond the power of kneeling or apologizing or retracting or doing anything else. He had collapsed completely and lost consciousness. Roger rapped upon the table for the servant and said to him:

"Attend to your master—he is injured. Come, Charlie."

They mounted their horses and rode away.

Roger took young Barnegal back with him to Alton House, because he feared to leave him in his present mood. It was after midnight when they arrived there, and Roger succeeded in getting his friend into bed. He was already in a fever.

In the meantime, Colonel Alton had sent for Jacqueline, and very tenderly and affectionately had told her simply this much—that Charles Barnegal had come to him asking for her hand; that he had previously received a letter from the young man's uncle, which, if its statements were true, rendered the marriage in question utterly impossible. He said to her further:

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“ I have Charles’s permission to tell you the facts that thus interfere with your life and his, if you choose to hear them. My own preference would be that you should not know them at all. Think it over, daughter, before you answer me, and I will do as you say in the matter.”

“ I do not need to think it over, father. I do not wish to hear any statement of the facts whatever. I am Jacqueline Alton—bear that in mind—and no daughter of Alton House has ever yet entered a family without the consent of its head. I will not be the first to violate a tradition of our house. But please, father, let no one speak to me of this. Let it end here. I will bear myself bravely as your daughter should.”

She kissed him, and in a moment more was gone.

It was a week before young Barnegal recovered from his illness. As soon as he was able to sit up he insisted upon leaving the house.

“ My presence here,” he explained to Roger, “ must of necessity be distressing to Jacqueline. If you will let Marlborough ride with me for this one day I will go this morning.”

Roger pleaded for the privilege of himself

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

accompanying his friend to his home, but the young man stoutly and steadily refused.

“No,” he said. “I am not going to remain at home. I am going away. I am going to the northward. There is fighting to be done there, and enemies who do not refuse to meet one who comes armed. We must say good-by to-day.”

“Be it as you will, Charlie,” said Roger, “but first we will drink a stirrup cup.”

He passed into the house, poured a rich goblet full of richer wine, and, standing by the side of Barnegal’s horse, after he had mounted, gave him to drink of it. Barnegal passed the cup in turn to Roger, who, holding his friend’s stirrup, drained the goblet and dashed it upon the stile shattering it to bits, in order that no human lips might ever again touch it.

It was an old custom, long disused except upon the occasion of partings that involved more than ordinary emotion.

XV

IN *which* ROGER ALTON LOSES *his* TEMPER

WHAT or how much Jacqueline Alton suffered in consequence of the events related in the preceding chapters, her friends were left to guess for themselves. That she should suffer severely was inevitable. She was much too true a woman to have given her love in a half-hearted way to any man, and the blow which had so stunned Barnegal must have been a terrible one to her—a woman without a man's resource of participation in the troubled life of the time.

But if she suffered she made no sign. Her face grew grave as the old joyousness died out of it. Her color, which had never been strong, faded away altogether; but her step was still elastic and her voice as cheerful as ever. She devoted herself with her customary earnestness to her varied duties. The blood of a proud race flowed in her veins, and she bore herself as

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

a proud woman, the daughter of such a house, should.

The servants saw nothing unusual in her appearance or manner. Visitors marked no change. Her very maid who had attended her in the solitude of her own chamber all the days of her life, guessed nothing of her mistress's sorrow. Somewhat later she was puzzled over the fact that "Miss Jack" began to lock her door whenever she quitted her room. This was a mystery to everyone, but it had no apparent connection with the events that preceded its beginning. In brief, the young woman bore herself in a most exemplary and gentlewomanly way, which was precisely what those who knew her had reason to expect at her hands.

Roger alone ever spoke to her on the subject that so distressed her, and he did so but once. It was several days after her interview with her father that Roger said to her :

"Jack, dear, I have some messages for you which I am charged to deliver, if you wish to receive them. They are messages explanatory in a way of what has occurred, yet they do not fully explain."

His sister at this point interrupted him, speaking quickly :

"Let's dismiss this whole subject, brother.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

You can readily believe that it is not a pleasant one to me. I need no explanations, and I want none. I am content to trust the wisdom which prompts my father and Charles to agree in this matter. I do not wish to know the details. I have but one favor to ask, and that is, that nobody shall know there ever was any engagement to break in the case. I do not need the sympathy of people outside the house, and Jacqueline Alton is not a person to be pitied by anybody."

Roger kissed her brow tenderly by way of reply, and the subject was henceforth a forbidden one in the house.

Some weeks later, Roger sat in the library discussing with his father matters connected with the business of the great estate with which Colonel Alton desired that his son should be familiar, so that in the event of his own death the young man might be prepared to succeed him in the management of affairs.

It was now April, and Roger, who had been busy since his return in organizing and drilling the militia of his district, had just received the following note from Governor Rutledge.

"CHARLES TOWN, *April 8, 1779.*

"MY DEAR SIR:

"I have private information of contemplated military operations which in my judgment are likely to result in

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

the immediate invasion of this state. I beg you, therefore, to hasten the work of organization in your district, if it be not already complete. I shall probably desire your presence at my headquarters shortly, and will thank you to hold yourself in readiness to join me at a moment's warning.

"With much esteem, I beg to subscribe myself, Sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"JOHN RUTLEDGE,

"Governor and Commander-in-Chief."

"To ROGER ALTON, Esq.,

"Captain and A. D. C."

It was in view of Roger's probable departure within a day or two that the present conversation was held. The business had been finished and Roger was re-arranging the papers, when Jacqueline tapped at the library door and entering, said:

"I have something to say to you, father, if you are at leisure to hear me."

"Certainly, my daughter," replied the old gentleman, placing an easy chair for her use in front of his own.

"Allow me to replace these papers," said Roger, "and I will withdraw. It will occupy only a minute or two."

"I think you need not go, brother," replied Jacqueline. "I have no longer any secrets to keep from you, and, as I was obliged to conceal this matter from you the other day when

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

you asked me about it, I am very anxious to have you hear what I have to say now, though indeed I do not understand it myself."

She said this with a puzzled, half-bewildered look upon her face. Roger bantered her a little upon her new role of mystery-monger, at which she smiled and replied:

"At least this mystery—for it is a mystery to me—is not of my making or my seeking." Then turning to her father she continued:

"About ten days ago, as I was returning from my visit to the sick people at the lower quarters* a man came out of the thicket and met me at the big gate. I was not alarmed when he accosted me, as the gate was shut between us, and the quarters were so near—just out of sight behind the grove—that Dolly would have taken me there in half a minute, if the man had seemed disposed to be rude. He was very gentle and courteous, however, and I think he chose that place for the meeting purposely, so that I might not be alarmed. He

* "Quarters" in Southern parlance, are negroes' houses, and on the plantations these were commonly built in two villages—one near the "great house," and the other at some distant point. The "lower quarters" of which Jacqueline spoke, were evidently those constituting the more distant group.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

gave me no name, but said he had something of very great importance to confide to my keeping, and that in giving it to me he would give me written instructions concerning it. He begged me to promise, however, that I would strictly follow the directions, assuring me that a failure to do so might bring serious trouble upon him. He then withdrew his request for a promise, saying:

“No,—I have no right to exact that. But I beg you to take what I shall give you to your own room and there read the letter which is addressed to you. After you have read it you will not refuse, I am sure, to do what I request of you.’

“With that he went into the bushes and brought out a queer little chest and a letter, and gave them to me, after which he touched his hat, bowed, and walked away into the swamp. The chest was singularly heavy for its size, but, covering it with my riding habit, I brought it home, and in my own room opened and read the letter. It is a queer document, and has puzzled me a good deal. If you will allow me I will read it to you. Singularly enough it is painfully wrought out in printing letters.” And with that, she read as follows:

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“Pray do not throw this sheet aside as an anonymous letter because it has no name signed at the bottom. I have no name to sign. I am a dead man, a man who died years ago, and as a dead man am unable to do what I am going to ask you to do for me. I died with a duty unperformed, and I cannot rest until it shall be done. I have toiled and suffered that I might rest a little, and the completion of my task I am placing in your hands. The little chest that I have given you holds that which belongs to your father. It has cost me years of toil and privation and suffering, but of that I have no right to complain. I speak of it only to impress upon you the necessity of guarding the chest carefully while it shall remain in your possession. Keep it and keep it in secret until the date carved upon its top shall come. Then take it to Geoffrey Alton and give it to him. By that time I shall be out of the neighborhood at least. If you deliver it sooner a search may be made for me, and if I be found, terrible suffering will ensue,—not to me, for I cannot suffer more than I do,—but to others who are innocent, as I am not. I enclose the key to the chest, in this letter.”

“Where is the chest, Jacqueline?” asked Colonel Alton and Roger in a breath.

“In my room. I’ll fetch it,” she said. “The date of delivery has come, and I shall be relieved to be rid of a secret.”

When she returned with the box in her hands, Roger sprang forward with a half-stifled exclamation of surprise and inspected it minutely.

“What’s the matter, brother,” asked Jac-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

queline. "Did you ever see the chest before?"

"If I did," replied he, turning away with a puzzled look, "I am under a pledge of secrecy regarding it. But I am not sure that I ever saw this box before. I have seen one which it closely resembles, and that under rather peculiar circumstances, but I am not free to tell you about it."

"You, too, cherishing a mysterious secret about a mysterious chest," exclaimed Jacqueline. "Really this is provoking. Here is a quiet, honest family suddenly thrown into a fog of mystery which it can neither penetrate nor dissipate, and that by no fault of its own, either."

While this conversation was in progress, Colonel Alton had opened the chest and now sat staring at its contents. It held gold coin and nothing else. On the inner surface of the lid was scratched an interest calculation, and beneath it were traced these words in printing letters:

"Interest not paid annually compounds annually. Count the contents and know that the debt is at last paid to the uttermost farthing. But alas the crime remains."

Colonel Alton closed the box and placed it

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

upon his desk. Then, leaning his head upon his hand, he ejaculated in tones of heartstricken tenderness:

“ My poor, dead friend! ”

Roger and Jacqueline noiselessly withdrew.

Colonel Alton evidently knew more than either his son or his daughter could guess regarding the source from which the chest of money had come, but he made no reference whatever to the subject, and they, of course, did not question him.

Not many days later came a courier with orders for Roger to join his chief immediately, and the young man, before leaving, sought a private conference with his father.

When closeted, Roger opened the conversation with more of trepidation than he was ever likely to feel in the presence of the enemy he was so soon to meet in the field.

“ I am afraid, father, that I have not acted altogether as I should in postponing this interview so long. I have waited, however, in the hope that I should be able to go to Lonsdale again before telling you that which, in strict propriety, I ought not to have been able to tell you at all until after a second visit. But my duties——”

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“My boy,” said Colonel Alton, interrupting him and speaking with evident emotion, “you are not about to tell me that you have paid your addresses to Helen Vargave. You do not mean that, I trust!”

There was that in the old gentleman’s voice which both puzzled and distressed his son. His tone expressed surprise and sorrow, even to wretchedness.

“I do not understand you, father,” said Roger, “and your tone pains me sorely. I have addressed Helen Vargave, and she has in effect promised to be my wife as soon as the troubled condition of the country shall have passed away. It remains only to secure your consent.”

A full minute or more elapsed before Colonel Alton replied.

“I am deeply grieved, Roger,” he said after awhile, “more deeply grieved than you can imagine. This is indeed a calamity. When I rejoiced in your return, and in the spirit of manliness which prompted it, I little thought that this was to be the result, else I should have mourned rather. You know very well that I have always disapproved of unnecessary paternal interference in these matters. It cost me a struggle to do my duty in Jacqueline’s case—a struggle

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

from which I have not yet quite recovered—and now I have a still more distressing necessity upon me. In that case, I had only to lay certain facts before Charles Barnegal which themselves forbade the banns. In this I must interfere and forbid them without stating any facts whatever. I cannot tell you why—but you can never marry Helen Vargave.”

Roger was stunned. There was no other woman in all Carolina, he had thought, who was likely to prove so acceptable to Colonel Alton as a daughter-in-law. He managed, in spite of the astonishment which nearly took away his breath, to ask:

“Why, father, what does this mean? You cannot mean to hint that Helen Vargave is unworthy to be the wife of an Alton?”

“No, no, no,” returned the other with vehemence. “She is the worthiest young woman I have any knowledge of, and that is what distresses me most. If she were less worthy—if I felt less tenderly regardful of her than I do,—it would pain me less to interfere. In that case I should care but little for the suffering I must inflict on her, and as for the pain given you—why, you are a man and a gentleman, able to bear life’s burdens with straight shoulders and head erect. It is for Helen,

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

whom I love as if she were my own daughter, that I am most deeply concerned."

"But, father," Roger broke in, "if you think so well of Helen, what earthly obstacle can there be to this marriage, which is not to take place in any case until the return of peace? Are not the Vargaves as good a family as our own or any other in the land, and is not her mother equally well connected?"

"Undoubtedly, and it was perfectly natural that you should have thought the connection altogether excellent. For any other young man in South Carolina, Helen Vargave would be a perfectly eligible bride—because no other young man's father knows what I know. I cannot tell you what that is,—I cannot show you why you may not marry Helen Vargave—I can only tell you that you may not and must not and shall not."

"Am I to be dealt with like a child?" cried Roger, with an indignation which he could neither suppress nor conceal. "Am I to be set guessing a lot of riddles like a king's fool? Am I to be put off with hints and innuendoes and mysterious references to unexplained circumstances, instead of plain facts which I can comprehend and judge for myself? I will submit to no such treatment. I am a full-grown

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

man; more than that, I am a gentleman, able both to hear and speak the truth. I will not be treated as if I were a babe in pinafores who must be wheedled into the surrender of unwholesome sugar plums. Tell me the plain facts, and trust me to conduct myself as an Alton should. That name is mine as well as yours, and I am as jealous of its honor as you are. I would not bring a stain upon it to save my life—no, not even to save your life, my father—but I will not be juggled with in this matter. I will have the whole truth, and will govern myself accordingly. I have sought Helen Vargave's love, and she has given it to me. I have pledged my honor to marry her. I have yet to learn that any Alton has ever proved recreant to such a pledge, and I am not going to be the first to bring dishonor upon the name."

Mr. Roger had wrought himself into a very pretty rage, certainly. Indeed he was fairly beside himself with passion, else he would never have used such language or such a tone in addressing his father. The young man expected—in a half-unconscious way—to be ordered out of the house the moment he ceased to speak; for the father—gentle as he was, and tender even to womanliness in his dealings with his

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

family,—was of stern and imperious temper in all that concerned his dignity, and the respect due to him.

A transient flushing of the face, however, was the only sign of annoyance he gave now, as he sat there in absolute silence, while Roger awaited his reply, and excitedly paced the floor. The silence continued until it grew painful. When at last the father broke it, his voice was as gentle as a woman's.

“Come and sit down, my son,” he said, “and listen to me as calmly as you can. I shall not rebuke your warmth, which under the circumstances does you honor, in spite of its impropriety when manifested by a son in addressing his father.”

Roger sat down abashed. He had been prepared for an outbreak of offended dignity, but this gentle half-praise made him ashamed of himself. His father continued speaking, however, giving him no chance to apologize,—perhaps because he feared the high-spirited young fellow might not avail himself of such an opportunity. That would have made the situation awkward.

“I am in honor bound, my son, to keep absolutely to myself, the knowledge upon which my decision in this matter rests. I should be

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

glad to give you all the facts if I could, but I may not give them to any human being without violating what I conceive is a most imperative obligation of honor. I may say this much to you, however, by way of explanation. There hangs a sword over Helen Vargave's head, and it hangs only by the frail thread of a monomaniac's will. The secret which I must keep—which I have kept sacredly, even when its keeping threatened us all with ruin—is not mine exclusively. If I alone knew it, it should die with me, and should be no bar to your happiness. But one other man knows it, and his hatred of the Vargaves, and of me and mine, amounts to insanity. He cherishes two bits of knowledge—this and one other—for the purpose of making them the ministers of his wrath. If Charles Barnegal should marry Jacqueline, this man would immediately publish one of the facts and strike us to the earth. If you should marry Helen Vargave, he would reveal the other, and wreak vengeance upon every one bearing the Vargave name. He may choose to avenge himself upon the Vargaves in any case. Against that, however, I have now a defence. One of his secrets he desires to keep because its publication would strike at the reputation of his own house. He has had to tell it

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

to me, however, and should he threaten to reveal the other for the destruction of the Vargaves, I should meet him with a counter-threat. I would reveal the stain upon his own name if he should dare lay a finger upon the fair fame of my friends the Vargaves. Years ago he threatened that, but his fear of some vengeance at my hands restrained him. I did not then know what he has since revealed to me, or I should all these years have held him to silence concerning the Vargaves by a securer bond than I have hitherto been able to impose. But he is my implacable enemy, and if he could at one blow destroy the Vargaves and bring sorrow to my family, he is desperate enough to accept the ruin I should bring upon his own house.

“Now, bear one thing well in mind. There is no stain upon the Alton name. There is nothing that can be said to our injury. There is no truth that we have any occasion to conceal. Our men have all been brave, and upright, and truthful. Our women have all been above reproach. You must not imagine that this human *tiger*,—that is the best epithet I can apply to him—can breathe aught to the shame or even to the reproach of any Alton who ever lived. But should Jacqueline marry young Barnegal, this tiger would blight the fame of

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

her husband, and so throw a shadow upon that of her children. If you marry Helen Vargave, he will bring dishonor to her house, and the Altons who shall come after you must bear a reproach. It is your duty not merely to keep the honor of your name untarnished by any act of your own, but equally to hand it down to your children free from inherited stains upon their mother's side. It is this duty to one's children, and this alone, which limits a man's right in choosing a wife to please only himself. He owes it to them to remember that in marrying he is appointing their mother, and not only so, but their grandparents and great-grandparents as well. But, as I have already intimated, it is for Helen's sake far more than your own that I am concerned. It is my duty to protect the wife and child of my dead friend by every means in my power, and I tell you solemnly that no worse ill can befall them than for you to make Helen Vargave your wife. Their enemy and mine would blight their name and bring a sorrow upon them of which Helen, at least, has never dreamed."

Roger was calm now, and able to speak respectfully, but he was by no means convinced.

"What you tell me, father, I am ready to accept as a sufficient explanation of your re-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

fusal to put me in possession of the facts; but I must frankly own that it does not convince me of my duty to break my engagement. Pardon me, but I think your anxiety leads you to exaggerate the danger. The man—your enemy, whoever he may be, and I think I know who he is—is afraid of you, it seems, and has been restrained for a long time by his cowardice. It seems to me unlikely that he will now invite at your hands a revelation that must bring ruin upon his own family and shame to his own name for the sake of wreaking a long postponed vengeance. And moreover, I have no valid excuse to offer for seeking a release from my engagement, even if I desired it. My first duty is to be true to my own obligations. As I look at the matter, I cannot honorably seek a release—and I shall not consent to be the first of my race recreant to the obligations of honor. I tell you frankly that if you command me to break this engagement, I shall disobey you.”

“Very well, my son. You are right in doing your duty as you understand it, and I have no wish that you shall do otherwise. I shall therefore give you no command in this case. Indeed, it is not necessary. The engagement will be broken soon enough without that. I have not told you these things to persuade you

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

to anything, or to compel you to anything, but simply to prepare you for the inevitable. I have no fear that you will ever marry Helen, and so I do not forbid it. I only warn you, in advance, that you can never marry her, so that you may be prepared.

“Now let’s talk no more of this. You are about to leave home, and the parting is sad enough to me, at any rate. I wish I could send you away with a lighter heart—as I do send you with my blessing. Hard money, as you know, is extremely scarce, and the State and Continental bills are well nigh worthless, wherefore I have filled a belt for you, with coin, for use in emergencies. You will find it in Jacqueline’s charge, and must wear it always upon your person.”

And so the conversation was turned with a firm hand to matters of detail connected with Roger’s departure, and the youth had no further chance to question his father’s purposes. An hour or two later, he rode away, attended by his servant—the stalwart young negro upon whom he had bestowed the ducal name of Marlborough.

XVI

HUMPHREYS

FUST as night fell, Captain Roger Alton dismounted at the door of the Charles Town mansion occupied by his chief as headquarters. Throwing his rein to Marlborough, with instructions as to the care of the hard-ridden horses, the young staff officer touched his hat to the sentinel who stood at the door with "presented" arms, and passed without further formality into the governor's office-room. Governor Rutledge rose as he entered, and held out his hand, saying:

"My dear boy, I am glad to see you, and you've come none too soon. We're likely to have work enough, shortly, and I shall need you badly. Colonel Alton is well, I trust."

"Quite as well as usual, thank you," replied the young aide-de-camp, "and as for myself, I am ready for service of as hard a sort as you have to offer, Governor Rutledge."

"That is well," replied his chief, "as I shall

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

have to put your readiness to the proof. You are well mounted, I hope."

"Nobody better so, sir. I've a pair of picked horses in admirable condition, and I have been training them to all kinds of difficult work under the saddle. But what's in the wind? What news have you?"

"Sh——. You shall hear presently. But you're hungry, and we'll take supper first. Then you shall hear what this excellent scout—I beg your pardon—but I've quite forgotten your name," turning to a stranger who sat in the shadow of the chimney.

"I am sometimes called Humphreys, sir. You may call me Humphreys, if you please."

Roger started. The voice which came out of the darkness was that of his companion, the sailor, and he was on the very point of betraying his own acquaintance with the man, when he remembered his promise and restrained himself.

"Ah, yes, Humphreys," said Governor Rutledge. "I had forgotten. Captain Alton, this is Mr. Humphreys who has been engaged in our secret service, and he brings me some important information. After supper we will hear in detail what he has to tell. You are famished now, I know. Come," and with

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

that the governor led the way to the dining-room.

At the table the man Humphreys, or whatever else his name was, acted his part in a way that excited Roger's admiration in the highest degree. He not only betrayed nothing of his former acquaintance with the young man, but asked him in the most natural way imaginable, if he was a native of South Carolina, if he had served before, in what district he lived, and various other questions of the kind, which one gentleman might ask another under such circumstances. As for Roger, he had great difficulty in preserving his gravity.

"Captain Alton has been in the country a very few months," remarked Governor Rutledge, during the meal. "And indeed, his coming was a rather remarkable one,—not to say romantic, and even heroic. He was so full of patriotism, that, failing to find a proper ship coming to Charles Town, he actually crossed from the Bahamas to Carolina in an open boat!"

"Indeed!" exclaimed Humphreys, with perfectly simulated astonishment. "You must have found the voyage a difficult, as well as a perilous one, did you not?"

"Somewhat so," replied Roger. "In fact,

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

I hardly think I should be here to discuss it but for the skill of a companion I had with me,— a seaman—who navigated my boat for me and ran her into an obscure little inlet during the blackest and stormiest night I ever knew.”

“A good sailor he must have been,” said the imperturbable Humphreys. “I should like to know him. The skill of such a man, and his knowledge of the coast would be invaluable to me, if I could persuade him to join me in some of my expeditions. Do you happen to know where he is at present?”

The cool assurance with which Humphreys asked this question startled Roger into something like resentment. “I wonder,” he thought, “if this man actually hopes to deceive me as well as the governor, and to persuade me that I am mistaken with regard to his own identity!” He glanced at the face of his questioner, but could read nothing in the frank, innocent expression of the countenance, except an apparently real wish to know more about the matter of which they were talking. Without removing his eyes from the face Roger replied:

“I have reason to think that he is a dead man now.”

“Ah,” said the other, without a sign of emo-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

tion, "that is unlucky. Such a fellow might have been extremely useful in the secret service."

"Not more so, I should say, than you yourself are," replied Roger, with some little hidden malice. "I imagine you have special gifts for secret service."

"Thank you," said the man, without appearing to see anything more in the remark than any stranger might. "You do me honor. I believe I have some qualifications, in the way of a knowledge of the country and some other things, for service of that kind. I have an earnest desire to help on the common cause, at any rate, and as for courage, life is not apt to be especially precious to a man who has as little as I have to live for."

The meal over, the three retired to a private room upstairs, first placing a sentinel upon the landing of the stairs with orders to prevent eavesdropping.

Here Humphreys told his story, of which Rutledge had as yet heard only a synopsis.

"I have been in the British camp for a week or more, and have found means of ascertaining what Prevost's plans are. General Lincoln is already moving up the Savannah River, intending to invade Georgia, and the moment he gets

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

well away from Purysburg on the road to Augusta, Prevost will cross the river in force, and march upon Charles Town, which he hopes to surprise and capture before Lincoln can come to its relief. The only thing that stands in his way is General Moultrie's small force near Purysburg and that is not sufficient even to check the British advance in any serious way. If Prevost can prevent news of his movement from reaching Lincoln—or if Lincoln persists in his campaign in spite of it, as he may do—or even in the event of Lincoln proving prudent and falling back from Augusta to Charles Town, it seems almost certain that Prevost can get here a day or two in advance. He hopes to throw himself into the city before Lincoln can arrive, fortify it, and await reinforcements from New York. This is his plan. Of its merits you, Governor Rutledge, can judge. What measures should be taken to meet it of course it is not for me to suggest; but if I can be of any service as a courier or otherwise, pray command me. If not, I will find a way to make my rifle of some use until you need me again.”

“Wait one moment,” said Rutledge. “How did you learn of this? I ask, you understand, for the purpose of ascertaining how

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

trustworthy your source of information is, and not at all because I doubt you. You have proved your faithfulness too effectively for that."

"I got my information directly from Prevost's own mouth, by what I should call lying, if it were not done in the service of my country against a very perfidious foe. I went to him as a tory resident of South Carolina, and after laying before him a minute account of some persecutions I professed to have suffered at the hands of the whigs, I was commanded by him to return and encourage my fellow tories with the promise of a speedy invasion, the plan for which he gave me as I have given it to you. His frankness in the matter astonished me, and is the only thing that causes me doubt. I do not at all know why he should thus indicate his plans, even in hints and suggestions, for of course he did not talk to me otherwise, but I am perfectly satisfied that my understanding of what he purposes is correct."

"Thank you," replied Rutledge. "Now I leave your action to your own judgment. Remember, I want trustworthy information. Get it in whatever way you can and report to me. You are supplied with money, I believe?"

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“Yes, sir, and you shall hear from me. When Prevost moves it will be desirable to know his precise strength, I suppose?”

“By all means, if you can learn it.”

“I shall learn it, sir, and when he appears on the Ashley River you shall know as well as he the figures of his morning reports.”

When Humphreys had left, Roger turned, and looking Governor Rutledge straight in the eyes asked. “What do you know of that man that you trust him so implicitly?”

“I know the man and something of his history,” answered Rutledge. “I could easily convince you of his trustworthiness, if I might tell you some things which I may not. Pardon me, I am not free to say more than this, but if at any time you have occasion for a trusty, verbal messenger, remember that you may repose as implicit confidence in that man’s truthfulness, intelligence, and patriotism as in my own. It may be of advantage to you to know this. Now to business. General Lincoln is marching towards Augusta. It is absolutely necessary that he should know of Prevost’s plans, and I do not care to risk a communication in writing. I must send you personally at daybreak to find him and tell him of what we have just now learned. I shall go at once to

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

Orangeburg, embody the militia there, and march immediately to Charles Town. Leave your servant and spare horse here. I will take them with me to Orangeburg, and you can join me there after finding Lincoln. Lose no time, however, as every hour is precious. On your journey, going and coming, if you find militia organized anywhere, order them at once to Orangeburg to join me. We must be prepared to keep Prevost out of Charles Town until Lincoln can get here. Can you be off by daylight?"

"I can leave at midnight, if you wish. My horses are in good condition, and will have had six hours' rest by that time."

"Good. But won't it tax your horse pretty severely, and so delay you in the end?"

"You don't know Bullet, Governor. He is a demon and needs breaking down to tame him. If this journey teaches him to behave like a reasonable animal, it will accomplish more than anything I've tried yet."

XVII

A *first* SMELL of GUN-POWDER

CAPTAIN ALTON was in no very enviable frame of mind when his unmanageable horse leaped ashore from the ferryboat, on the south side of the Ashley River, a little after midnight. It was raining, for one thing, and the blinding glare of the frequent lightning served to make his progress somewhat difficult. He was a bold rider, however, and just now a rather desperate young man, as well. Somehow, the meeting with Humphreys and the additional mystery the man had contrived to throw around himself had the effect of irritating Roger far more than he was accustomed to permit small matters to do.

For reasons which he could not explain to himself, he had come to feel that this man Humphreys was in some fashion connected with the secrets which his father was keeping from him, and this reminded him of the con-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

versation he had so lately held at Alton House, which, the more he thought of it, became more and more a source of almost unbearable annoyance. It was provoking beyond endurance to be baffled in this way by mysteries at every turn, to be met even by his father with vague hints of inscrutable things, instead of the frank confidence with which he had always been treated; to be told that he must not and could not marry Helen Vargave, and to be refused even a hint of a reason why; to discover that the obstacle in the way was in some manner connected with that which thwarted Charles Barnegal's suit for Jacqueline's hand—all these things vexed and angered, while they depressed him.

“ I'll burst these bonds,” he exclaimed aloud in his anger. “ I will not be the sport of a lot of fancies. I will refuse to govern myself by hints and innuendoes. I will not listen to half told tales, or suffer the secrets of other people to bring ruin upon my life. Helen Vargave is a gentlewoman, my equal, and she loves me. I am a man of full age, able to take care of my own honor, and to manage my own affairs. I will go to Helen, tell her the truth so far as I am graciously permitted to know it, and I will marry her in spite of all the mysterious mono-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

maniacs in the Carolinas. Then I shall have a right to protect her good name as I do my own, and if the human tiger of my father's fears dares breathe aught to her disadvantage, I will avenge her as a gentleman should, and I will make the vengeance terrible enough to prevent any repetition of the wrong."

This was all very well as a resolution, but there remained to depress him the unexplained words with which Colonel Alton had closed the conversation on this subject,—

"I give you no command,—the engagement will be broken soon enough without that."

He wondered what that meant, and, imagining all sorts of things, managed to work himself into a very uncomfortable state of mind before the morning broke. He breakfasted in the woods upon the contents of his saddle-bags, and pressed on until noon, when he halted to give Bullet something to eat at a wayside hostelry. Here he determined to remain during the two or three hottest hours of the day, and discover, if he could, something of General Lincoln's whereabouts. That the army was already in motion he knew, and if he could learn precisely when it left Purysburg, he might save some hours certainly and possibly some days in his effort to come up with it. After seeing his

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

horse properly fed and groomed, therefore, he sat down in the broad piazza of the tavern, and bade the servant—who brought him the ready-mixed dram of the time and country—seek the landlord, and tell him a guest wished to speak with him.

Boniface came out in his shirt sleeves with a long-stemmed pipe in his mouth and welcomed the traveler. Roger made his inquiries, and having gathered such information as he could with respect to roads and other matters of interest, began asking his host a variety of questions on more general topics, in pursuance of a purpose he had formed to learn as much as possible of the country and people wherever he should go, with an eye to the possible usefulness of such information in future campaigning. The landlord was garrulous, as it becomes all rural landlords to be, and was not long in giving Roger a brief outline of the history of every family in the country for thirty or forty miles around, including his own.

“If you’d got here an hour sooner’n you did, stranger, you’d a met just a little the finest old gentleman in South Carolina, as I count gentlemen,” said the inn-keeper presently.

“Ah, then I am sorry I was so late in coming,” said Roger. “But who was he, pray?”

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“It was Colonel Geoffrey Alton, of Alton House, and a finer gentleman I don’t believe this country holds. He’s none o’ your paper money, savin’ sort. He travels in his carriage, if he does travel by himself, and here’s the sort o’ money he pays his way with.” As he said this, the enthusiastic landlord drew from his pocket two gold pieces and displayed them in his open palm. The host’s enthusiasm over the golden souvenirs of his late guest’s visit served to distract his attention from Roger’s face, and that young gentleman had time to suppress all manifestations of astonishment before asking, with an assumed air of meagre interest:

“Where was the colonel going?”

“Now look here, stranger,” said Boniface, with an injured tone, “do you take me for the sort o’ man that pries into gentlemen’s private affairs with impertinent questions? I answer questions, but I don’t ask them. If a gentleman pays his bill I bid him God speed, without wantin’ to know which way he’s goin’.”

“Oh, certainly,” said Roger, with assumed indifference. “I quite understand the delicacy of your position. I thought perhaps Colonel Alton might have mentioned his destination of his own accord. That was all. He is a friend

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

of my own, and I should have been much pleased to meet him here."

"Your friend, is he? Well, if you want to know where he's gone, I reckon I can find out. Enoch! Enoch! Come here, do you heah?" This last to the negro hostler, who, without answering, came to the steps in front of his master.

"Did you pump Colonel Alton's driver—as I told you never to do—and find out where he was going?"

"I dun ax de drivah, sah, but he didn't rightly know, hissef. He say his mastah little bit crusty, an' he dussent ax him any questions, but he say he spec' dey's gwine down to Lonsdale, de widdah Vargave's place, an' dat's all he know'd about it."

Mr. Roger did small justice to the landlord's dinner after receiving this intelligence, and when Bullet had eaten the oats and fodder given him, the young man mounted and continued his journey, with a depressed feeling of coming ill upon him. He knew that his father's journey to Lonsdale boded no good to him, and he now began to understand the words over which he had been puzzling all the morning.

His powerful horse was not yet reduced to proper subjection, and with an impulse which

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

all horsemen who have ever ridden with a burden of depression upon them will understand, he plunged spurs into the wild creature's sides and gave free rein to his furious impetuosity. Maddened by this application of the armed heel—the first he had ever known of it—the animal sprang forward with heedless, headlong fury, and the first awakening Roger had from the half-trance into which he had fallen, was produced by a sudden cry of "Halt there!" and the hiss of half a dozen bullets around his head. Mechanically he drew his sword without pausing to think of the odds against him, and was on the point of charging a little body of British regulars twenty yards in front of him, when suddenly he heard the familiar voice of Humphreys just behind him.

"Don't charge, but run at your best speed—you have dispatches."

The words were spoken in the man's uniformly quiet tone, without seeming emotion, and equally without a sign of haste. But their very quietude startled Roger into instant consciousness of his situation. Turning he fled, with Humphreys at his side.

"Spur your horse, and lie down as low as you can," said Humphreys, setting the example,



"The two were soon in the midst of a vast swamp."

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

and as the words left his lips the fire of the whole advance guard whistled around them.

"Follow me," said Humphreys, plunging into the swamp at the side of the road, picking his way through the dense underbrush and over the treacherous bogs with a precision and certainty which argued a minute acquaintance with the place. The two were soon many miles away from the road in the midst of a vast swamp, and knowing themselves safe from further pursuit, they slackened speed and rode quietly until night approached.

"There's a little high ground, just ahead, on which we'd better spend the night, I think," said Humphreys. "In the morning I will pilot you out of the swamp, and put you on the road in pursuit of General Lincoln. You must find him pretty quickly, however, to do any good. You see the British are already advancing in force, and will be before Charles Town in two days. That was their extreme left wing that you encountered. The main body is moving by a road nearer the coast, and the advance has halted at Pocotaligo, to wait for the rest to come up. You can say to General Lincoln, if you choose, that they are moving in full force with all their baggage and ammunition trains."

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

Roger readily guessed the man's desire to avoid all discussion of personal matters, and he respected it as a gentleman must. The two were weary enough to sleep soundly, and in the morning Humphreys guided Roger to the western extremity of the swamp, where they separated.

Roger was not long in learning that Lincoln had already been advised of Prevost's movement, and that after detaching a small body under Harris to re-enforce Moultrie, the American general had crossed into Georgia, and was now marching down the right bank of the river. It was apparently General Lincoln's purpose to threaten Savannah, in the hope that Prevost might thus be compelled to beat a hasty retreat, or failing in that, he thought it not impossible that he might actually recapture Savannah, while the British should be engaged in besieging Charles Town. If he could do that, he would march thence to Charles Town, and place Prevost between two fires.

This movement of Lincoln's down the Savannah River had brought him within about a score or so of miles from the place at which Roger had parted with Humphreys, and by allowing Bullet to push forward at a gait agreeable to that energetic animal, and consonant

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

with his rather exaggerated notions of what constitutes a proper travelling speed, Roger was able to eat a midday dinner with the commander of the American army. Here he learned the nature and purpose of Lincoln's movement, and after dinner was detained by Lincoln till near nightfall, before he hastened away in the direction of Orangeburg, with a message from Lincoln to Rutledge.

"Tell Rutledge," said the general, "that if Prevost does not retreat I shall attempt the capture of Savannah, unless I find it impracticable. If Prevost persists, however, I shall not waste many days around Savannah. Whether I take the city, or abandon the idea of trying, I shall march upon Charles Town very shortly. Moultrie with his Continentals, and Rutledge with the militia, can surely keep the British out of the town for a week at least, and by that time I shall fall upon the enemy's rear, and, between the two, we should be able to grind him to powder. Tell Rutledge he has only to make a determined stand."

With this encouraging message in charge, Roger dashed away on the long journey to Orangeburg.

XVIII

A LOVE LETTER

HOWEVER pressing may be affairs of state, especially to enthusiastic young men engaged in a war for all that human nature holds dear, affairs of a nearer and dearer kind insist sometimes upon their superior claim to attention. When Roger Alton reached General Lincoln's headquarters, he found six or seven hours of comparative leisure at his command.

The young man employed the time of waiting in writing a letter to Helen Vargave. Fortunately, for the purposes of this story, the missive has been reverently preserved in family archives, and I am permitted by those who now control it to give it here.

"My father has said strange and inexplicable things to me," he wrote. "He has told me that you and I can never marry, but he has not told me why. He has not even forbidden the banns. He tells me there is no woman in Carolina

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

whom he would so gladly welcome as his daughter, as he would you, no woman whom he would so rejoice to see mistress of Alton House. Yet he tells me our dear dream can never be. He has intimated that you will yourself forbid, and I learned only to-day that he has gone to Lonsdale to bring this horrible thing, as I suppose, to your attention. I write, therefore, to say the thought that is in me. I know not what my father is at this moment saying to you. But I know this, dear Helen, that when I comforted you out there in the boat and you gave me your love, you became MY WIFE before God and all his angels. All that is essential to marriage is mutual love, and whether or not you are persuaded to say, as my father expects, that you will never consent to our formal and legal marriage, I at least, shall hold myself loyal until death to the bond that already exists between us. By all that is holy in marriage, by all that is pure, by all that God intended when he gave Eve to Adam, you are my wife, and will always be so, not 'until death us shall part' as the formal service hath it, but rather until death shall unite us more completely in a higher life where the shallow conventionalities of this probationary time shall be swept away.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“ It is my resolution, dear, to seal the marriage of our souls by legal and churchly bonds whenever you shall consent to do so, regardless of any man’s objections or any man’s threats, or any human being’s consequential suffering; and, if you forbid that, to hold myself yours and you mine in a higher than formal union—a soul marriage of unselfish, unquestioning love, that seeks no sanction and asks no reward.

“ I do not ask you to reply to this letter. It may be inconvenient for you to set down on paper what you would say to me if I could be by your side to hear. But at any rate I want you to know what my attitude in this matter is and what it must always be. A woman such as you does not love except with all of soul that she possesses. When you permitted me to caress you as your lover, you became mine—my wife—by a stronger and holier tie than any that the law knows or any that the church recognizes. And I, in my turn, when I sought your love and secured it, bound myself beyond all possibility—all desire—of recall. From a love such as ours there is no withdrawal. In such a love there is no reserve. To such a love there is no end.

“ As I have said, I do not exact an answer to this letter. I well understand how your

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

maidenly reserve might shrink from the task of writing a reply. I shall wait until I can hear from your own lips what answer you have to make, and meantime I shall know in my heart what your answer is. For I have not misjudged the soul of the woman I love.

“And now, adieu! I have a long and hurried journey to make in behalf of our country’s cause. If you are moved at any time to write me a line, send it to Alton House. I will send thither from time to time for letters. I am in the way of danger just now, of course, and perhaps a British bullet, or an ill-parried sabrestroke may settle for us all questions of the forms of marriage. But the precious fact of our marriage will remain to the ultimate end of eternity itself. To such love as ours death is a trifling, temporary incident. The love itself is immortal.”

By one of those coincidences that seemed always to govern Humphreys’s appearances, that person presented himself in answer to Roger’s request of General Lincoln for a trusty messenger by whom to send his letter to Helen. When the man read the superscription he seemed for a moment about to fall from his horse, but, recovering himself, he said:

“My duties as a scout will not permit me

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

to go in person to Lonsdale. But I will see to it that one as trusty as I am shall deliver your letter, Captain Alton. I make myself personally responsible for that."

"Thank you!" replied the young man. "I trust you implicitly."

"Thank you for that, in my turn," said the man, with a good deal more of emotion than the occasion seemed to call for. "You will never know," he added, "how much your confidence means to me."

XIX

A BATTLE *in the* DARK

THE people of Charles Town were naturally in a state of intense excitement when it became known that the British were advancing upon their city with serious intent. They quite well understood that the only force opposing Prevost's advance was a small body composed in part of Continentals, and in part of untrained militiamen—the whole numbering very much less than one-half of Prevost's drilled, disciplined, and war-hardened army. The city was scarcely at all prepared to resist an attack by land. All that had been done in the way of constructing defensive works had been done for the purpose of resisting an attack by sea. On the land side the way was apparently open to any invader who might appear.

The city lay upon a narrow tongue of land formed by the Ashley and Cooper Rivers, which, uniting at the lower point of the town,

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

formed the harbor. If Prevost had known his own mind, and had acted with reasonable promptitude after he began his march, he might easily have made himself master of Carolina's capital. Luckily for the Carolinians, the British commander had that worst of vices in a military man—a habit of indecision and hesitation. About half way between Savannah and Charles Town, at Pocotaligo, he halted; and for three days lay there, uncertain whether to advance in accordance with his original purpose or retreat in view of Lincoln's movement against Savannah. So far Lincoln's strategy had proved effective, for without doubt it was Prevost's fear that the Americans might capture Savannah, which led him thus to hesitate.

While he was waiting there, uncertain whether to push on or to withdraw, the vigorous Carolinians were getting that which they needed more than all else—namely, time for preparation—and under inspiration of Rutledge's tireless energy, they made most excellent use of it. The houses in the suburbs above the city were unhesitatingly burned away. Every man who could handle a pick, or a shovel, or any other implement with which fortifications are made, was kept at work by night and by day, and when, on the 9th of May, Prevost's

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

bayonets glistened in the sunlight south of the Ashley, a strong line of redoubts stretched across the neck of land between the two rivers, and Charles Town was shut in. Only one avenue of communication between the city and the country without remained open, and that was inaccessible to the enemy. It was a ferry across the Cooper River, north of the city, while the British were operating from the south.

But troops were needed as well as earth-works, and the delay which had given time for the erection of fortifications, had served also to bring defenders to the capital. Almost at the moment of Prevost's appearance came Moultrie with his little army, and Rutledge with the militia from Orangeburg. The danger was still great, however. Prevost's force outnumbered the total garrison and consisted of British regulars.

The Americans were unlucky enough to have two chiefs dividing between them the authority which should have been exercised by only one. As a commander in the Continental army, Moultrie of course had control of all the Continentals present, but Rutledge, who, as we know, had been invested by the legislature with almost dictatorial powers, asserted and maintained his right to command the militia. This

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

situation was one tending strongly to confusion and disaster. But the two men were equally patriotic, and each was disposed to aid and cooperate with the other. They held an informal consultation, and it was agreed that they should act together in making resistance to the utmost, in spite of the clamor of timid citizens who, fearing a bombardment, and despairing of successful defence, pleaded with the governor to surrender the town. It was at this time that Roger Alton arrived with the message from General Lincoln.

Now that they knew that Lincoln would speedily march to the relief of Charles Town, the problem set Moultrie and Rutledge was simply that of keeping the British at bay until the main army should arrive. Whether or not this could be accomplished was a matter of serious doubt. Prevost's hesitation at Pocolaligo had given them opportunity, as we have seen, to make preparation, but had he acted promptly even now, he could have thrown himself into Charles Town without much difficulty. He again hesitated, however. He appeared on the south bank of the Ashley on the ninth of May, and lay there inactive until the eleventh before crossing with his advance guard and demanding the surrender of the town. He was

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

promptly and furiously attacked by Count Pulaski, whom he repulsed with great slaughter. It soon became apparent to both sides that the British could carry the works by storm whenever they should have stomach for that bloody kind of work. This, with the additional fact that the enemy's guns were near enough to bombard the city with destructive effect, led to negotiations for surrender. It was the cue of the Americans to protract these negotiations as much as possible in the hope that relief might come in time to save the town, as in the event it did.

News was brought during the night to the timid Prevost that Lincoln was near at hand with his army, and before morning the British had abandoned their positions and retired to the south of the Ashley River. Lincoln was still south of them, however, and directly in the line of their retreat towards Savannah. Not daring to meet him on ground of his own choosing, Prevost made a flank movement to the Sea Islands that skirt the coast. At Stono Ferry, on John's Island, he strongly fortified himself, and for more than a month the two armies confronted each other, neither caring to risk a decisive action.

Roger Alton had remained with Rutledge

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

during the brief struggle before Charles Town, but when the British retired to John's Island, he asked and obtained his chief's permission to join General Lincoln with such a force of volunteers as he might be able to raise for that purpose. Going among the militiamen who were preparing to return to their homes—after the manner prevalent among militiamen at that time—he collected a band of about twenty mounted men, volunteers, and with this little command he reported the next day at Stono Ferry.

His men were fellows of restless spirit, and great daring; men far less valuable to a community in time of peace than were the more orderly militiamen who assembled upon occasion to meet and fight an enemy, but who returned to their ploughs the moment the immediate necessity of fighting was past. Roger's men were young fellows who liked adventure, and relished the excitement and uncertainty of that partisan warfare which was just then beginning to develop itself, and which later, under Marion and Sumter, achieved so much as to write new chapters into military history, and the books of tactics. With these rough riders whom Roger had gathered about him, there was no love for the idleness of camp life.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

Their whole idea of the war was that the enemy had no business to be in their country, and must be constantly annoyed so long as he should remain there. This they felt ought to be their task to attend to, and their leader was distinctly like-minded with themselves.

Thus, weary of inactivity, even in prospect, Roger despatched Marlborough to Alton House with letters, and instantly applied to General Lincoln for permission to act independently against such straggling bodies of the enemy as he might be able to find. General Lincoln highly approved of this mode of warfare, the more especially as the British were availing themselves of the opportunity afforded by the pause to pillage the Island plantations and to commit depredations of every sort upon the defenceless inhabitants. Among such depredations, the most damaging was that of invading plantations and, besides carrying off such spoils as might be found there, capturing the entire force of negro slaves and taking them away. This form of depredation was not committed with even a pretence of humanity to excuse it. It was no part of the British purpose, then or afterwards, during the long, dark days of the struggle in Carolina, to carry any of the negro slaves into freedom. They were sent instead to

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

British plantations and public works in the West India Islands, and into a servitude more cruel than any that the American mind at any period in history has tolerated.

To interrupt these forays, to make the occupation of the Sea Islands as uncomfortable as possible to the enemy, to capture his pickets and scouting parties, and generally to keep up that wearing, night and day annoyance which organized troops dread far more than they do systematic battle—was the task that Roger Alton had undertaken.

Crossing from the mainland to the island with his little force under cover of darkness, young Alton put himself in communication with such of the inhabitants as he could certainly trust, and prepared to strike at every point where striking promised results. As his men were well mounted and accustomed all their lives to hard riding, retreat was always open to them, in the event of failure, and they were so desperately in earnest—as unpaid soldiers in their own cause—that their young chief trusted confidently to their patriotism and courage as full equivalents of the discipline and training which they lacked. For nearly a month he remained on the island and its insular neighbors, attacking small posts, capturing pickets

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

and foraging parties, and keeping the enemy in a state of perpetual uneasiness. His prisoners were sent to the mainland as soon as taken, and he was left free to continue his work unembarrassed by their care.

The British commanders on the island made more than one determined and well-planned attempt to capture the "Mosquitoes" as they called Roger's little handful of men, but by constant vigilance and frequent changing of position, the young partisan managed to baffle them to the last. He moved cautiously and quickly, and for the most part by night, hiding away during the day in swamps and other places where he was not likely to be found.

On one very dark night, about a month after these operations had begun, as he was pushing across the island to escape the attack of a strong body sent out to capture him, he turned to the man riding by his side whom he could not distinguish in the darkness and said:

"There's the river ahead. We must cross there if we can and wait for daylight. Ride on, and see if there are any British there and report to me here."

"It is not necessary, sir," replied the man. "I can report now."

"What, Humphreys! you here! Where have

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

you come from, and how have you found me?"

"There's little time for talking now, sir. I have been on the island frequently since you came, and have seen you a dozen times. I have news for you to-night, and I came to bring it. Our people are going to attack the enemy in force at the ferry to-morrow or next day. If you want to be in the action, you must make haste to get off the island, but you will find a lot of trouble in doing it, I am afraid. They have made up their minds to catch you this time and have posted men everywhere for that purpose. But there are two courses open to you. There's a little piece of swamp not very strongly guarded just below the ferry which you may possibly be able to slip through, and if not, you can keep out of sight until the fight begins. Then there will be a general rush for the battle-field, I take it."

"Is there any force on the river just ahead of us here?"

"Yes, sir; a hundred men."

"Cavalry?"

"No, sir; on foot."

"They have warning of our presence or approach?"

"I think not, sir, but all the river guards

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

are under special orders to look out for you."

"How are they posted?"

"I do not know, but if you will halt here briefly, I will reconnoitre them."

"Very well. Do so, and report as soon as may be, if you please."

With that Roger halted his band, and turning to one of them said: "Take three men with you, and ride back half a mile. Make a little circuit, and return at once, as I shall be ready to move by that time. We must halt here fifteen minutes, and must not be surprised from the rear. Reconnoitre in that direction sharply."

In less than a quarter of an hour, Humphreys returned, and Roger talked with him apart in a low tone.

"Can we force our way past them, think you, and make a crossing?" he asked eagerly.

"That is for you to say, sir. If you ask my opinion, I should say not. They number at least a hundred men, and are on the alert. They have posted two lines of guards about a hundred yards apart, and the main body is resting on its arms in line right across the road. We could push past the guards, of course, but they would fire in time to bring the rest to their

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

feet, and then we should have to fight them on their own ground. That is the situation, sir."

Just as he had finished speaking, the scouts returned from the rear at a rapid gait. Roger heard their report. It was to the effect that a commanding force of the enemy was closing in upon his little band from that direction.

"Resume your places in the ranks," Roger said. Then approaching the line he quietly gave the order to mount. "Attention, men," he said. "I have something to say to you. The enemy is making a determined effort to catch us to-night, and has honored us by sending two or three hundred men after twenty volunteers. Just ahead of us—not half a mile away—lies the stream, and the crossing is guarded by about one hundred infantry men, well posted, with two lines of guards out, the main body sleeping on arms in line of battle, ready to receive us. If we attempt to make the crossing, we must fight them without a chance of taking them by surprise, but it seems there is now no help for it. Another and much larger body, our scouts report, has cut off our retreat, and is gradually advancing in a semi-circle in our rear to hem us in on the river. We might possibly escape as individuals by separating and

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

hiding, but I for one am not yet ready to play the part of a hare. *I am going to attack the force on the bank*, and if there's a man among you who is not willing to follow me, he may ride out of the ranks."

"We will follow you, Captain," said all in a breath.

"Good! and I thank you for it. I want the two best mounted men among you first." Two men rode out to receive orders. "Humphreys," said Roger, "I want you to take these two men with you. Ride around to the south there and attack the pickets at that point. Crowd up as close to them as you can, and give them half a dozen shots, but scatter a little first, so that they may not be able to locate you, or guess your numbers. The moment you have delivered your shots, ride back here like the deuce and join us. I will attack here as soon as their attention is concentrated upon you, and before they find out that you have left their front on the south, we will be upon them like lightning on the north. We may thus get the advantage of a surprise after all. Now men, attention! We cannot afford to take prisoners to-night. The enemy outnumbers us five to one in our front, and twenty or thirty to one in our rear. We are making this attack to get out of a trap

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

—not to take prisoners. We are going into a desperate fight, and every man must fight desperately. Fight always toward the river bank, and remember that our object is to form a line between the red coats and the river. Accomplish that and I will take care of the rest. Forward, march!”

Silently they rode forward in the darkness, Roger fifty yards in advance, until he discovered the first line of guards just ahead of him. Then whirling, he retraced his steps a little way, and halted his men to await the proper moment of attack. A profounder silence than that in which they sat in their saddles it is not easy to imagine. Roger heard even the ticking of his watch as he listened for Humphreys's opening shots.

Minutes dragged with intolerable slowness—then, “Bang-bang-bang-bang-bang! Pop-pop-pop-pop-pop!” rattled the guns to the south. Humphreys had done his work well, and the enemy was wasting whole volleys in the thicket whence the first shots had come. As the scout and his two companions came running their horses to join the main body Roger called in a hoarse whisper, “Now for it, boys!” and the next moment the little band rode over the guards just in front, and through the inner

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

picket line, receiving a shot or two. They fell upon the main body as the thunderbolt falls. The night was pitchy dark, and the flash of the British muskets, while it served to reveal the position and strength of the enemy to young Alton, only blinded the British to his weakness. Right and left fell the sabre strokes, the sturdy horses riding down every foeman who stood in their way. After the first volley was fired, the furious onset threw the British line into confusion before the muskets could be re-loaded. Half a minute later the young commander's voice rang out on the river bank:

“Attention! Form line! by twos, forward, march!”

A splashing in the water, then a scattering fire from the astonished British, and the opposite shore was gained. The fight had not lasted two minutes, but two of Roger's men were missing, and wellnigh every sabre showed a dark red stain when the light of morning broke upon the little band.

Roger Alton had learned his trade as a partisan warrior.

XX

WHICH *maidenly* MODESTY MAKES *very* BRIEF

PERHAPS something of spirit was lent to young Captain Alton's fight by the riverside, by a letter which Marlborough, returning from Alton House, had brought to him that day. It was Helen's reply to the missive he had sent from Gen. Lincoln's headquarters in Georgia.

She wrote:

"Your letter, Roger, is dearer to me than I have words to tell. You judge rightly when you excuse me from replying, on the ground that maidenly reserve must forbid me to write all that is in my mind and heart. Yet I must tell you that Col. Alton's communications through my mother to me, have indeed rendered impossible the fulfilment, now or hereafter, of the dear dream in which we have indulged. I cannot tell you why, until I can tell you orally. Indeed I cannot fully tell you why, even then, because I do not myself quite understand. But I know enough to know what my duty is, and, sadly terrible as it is, I shall do it as bravely as you are doing yours as a soldier. You would not love me if I failed in that!

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“But what you say to me in your letter is dearer to me than life, dearer than any happiness. My soul responds to every sentiment you have set down. I can never take back the love I gave you that day in the boat out there on the sunny sea. Fate decrees that I shall never be yours in the contemplation of the world, but love is superior to fate, and while consciousness endures, in time or in eternity, I shall always be yours—by the precious name that you have so lovingly given me—your wife.

“HELEN.”

That was all. Is it any wonder that after reading the note, Captain Alton was in a mood for very hard fighting?

XXI

IN *which* CAPTAIN ALTON *meets the* ENEMY
and a FRIEND

IN the assault on the following day the Americans had the advantage for an hour, but during the remaining twenty minutes of the fight the British succeeded in so concentrating their forces as to drive the Americans back. Nevertheless, the advantage at the end of the day remained with the Americans in this that the fight had demonstrated the fact that they were more than a match for the force left on John's Island under Colonel Maitland, for by this time, Prevost, with the main body of his army had retired to Savannah. The result of the action was one which we should regard as curious in our day. It ended on the one hand in the retirement of the British from the position which they had intended to hold, and on the other in the practical dissolution of the American army; for the moment that the British began their retreat upon Savannah, the American militiamen who

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

constituted the bulk of Lincoln's army quitted their posts and started home to look after their farming operations.

This was a common difficulty in all parts of the country throughout the Revolution. No sooner had a general achieved a victory which, if vigorously followed up might bring about important results, than his men went home and left him without an army capable of following it up at all. Thus, a day or two after Lincoln had demonstrated on John's Island his ability to crush Colonel Maitland, he was left with a mere handful of men—about half a modern regiment—as the only army under his command. Nevertheless, he ordered his cavalry to push the rear guard of the retreating enemy as closely as it might, to harass their bivouacs and annoy their picket posts as ceaselessly as possible.

In this work, Roger Alton's little command proved unusually efficient. It had been trained to wily work, and wiliness now counted for as much as that high courage which these men also had. All the way down the coast, while the cavalry of the regular army moved with an orderly precision which the enemy could reckon upon and meet, the little band of partisans dashed hither and thither in irregular fashion

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

appearing at unexpected places, striking unlooked for blows that told against superior numbers, and disappearing again so quickly as to suffer comparatively little harm in return. Roger had received several recruits from among the militia after the battle at Stono Inlet, yet by the time that the enemy paused at Port Royal, his force had been weakened by losses in skirmish fighting until it now numbered only fifteen men besides himself.

It was with this little force that he made a final dash into the enemy's camp, after orders had come from General Lincoln to cease the pursuit. This last dash was inspired as much by bravado as by patriotism. Young Alton had so far accustomed himself to play a bold game, and had met with so much success as the result of his audacity that it pleased him now and then to do things which strict military science would characterize as utterly injudicious; doing them merely by way of demonstrating the fact that, with troopers such as his, he could do pretty much as he pleased.

In this last instance, he had ridden around on the enemy's flank which, being unthreatened by any orderly force was left scantily guarded. It was just after nightfall, and, after creeping as close as possible to the half-guarded camp,

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

Roger suddenly pushed through the thin picket line, and at the head of his men dashed into and entirely across the camp of a strong British battalion. The thing was easily enough done, but it was not easily undone. Having gone through the camp our young cavalier must also go back again, for in front of him lay the entire body of the British army. Going back was rendered difficult by the fact that the battalion which he had taken unawares was now thoroughly on the alert. Nevertheless, the return charge had to be made, and Roger made it with all the impetuosity that excited men, and hard-spurred horses, could command. When he rode at last into the safety of the woodlands near at hand, five of his saddles were empty and Captain Alton himself had a very uncomfortable pain in his left shoulder. A hurried examination of that part of his anatomy made in the darkness of the night and woodland shadows disclosed to him the fact that a half-ounce British bullet had passed through the muscles from in front and lodged painfully in the joint which connected his arm with his body.

Retiring into the woodlands he met a small body of Continentals who had bivouacked there for the night. His request for permission to join them around their camp fire was instantly

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

granted of course and he had himself scarcely dismounted when there came out of the darkness into the glare of the fire the familiar form and friendly face of young Charles Barnegal. The meeting between the two friends was eagerly gladsome, but Barnegal quickly saw that cadaverous look in the face of his friend which always comes as the instant consequence of a painful bullet wound.

“You are hit,” he said. “Where? Are you much hurt?”

Roger replied that his shoulder ached, but that he did not know the extent of the injury. He added: “Have you a surgeon here?”

Unfortunately there was none, and even had there been one, in that time and country his skill would have been small, and his appliances of a sort ruder than any that modern surgery dreams of. A bullet-broken arm, in those days meant amputation without ether or other anæsthetic, and for antiseptic treatment of the wound it meant the plunging of the lacerated member into a bucket of almost boiling tar. It was rough treatment, but, in its unconscious way, good. If the patient did not die of shock he was left in little danger of blood poisoning from a wound which had been disinfected by scalding pine tar. It is to be remembered to the

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

credit of those great-grandfathers of ours who achieved independence for us, that in all their fighting they risked not only the ordinary perils of battle, but also extraordinary sufferings and dangers, owing to the absence of anything like what is now known as surgery. It requires far less of courage to face the danger of death with a cheerful mind than to brave the agony of wounds which must be dressed without the aid of palliating medicament of any kind.

Young Barnegal almost dragged his friend to the fire for the sake of its light, and stripping off his garments exposed the wound. He found the bullet wedged into the shoulder joint in a way to cause the most excruciating pain. Its extraction was instantly necessary. And so young Barnegal proceeded to extract it. With a horse fleam he slightly enlarged the wound, and with a pair of blacksmith's pincers he succeeded, after several attempts, in withdrawing the bullet and throwing his friend into a state of collapsed unconsciousness.

A gourd full of cold water dashed into his face and over his bosom quickly restored the young man to himself. A stiff drink of brandy soon gave him strength enough to enable him to retire with his friend into the woods where the latter had established a little bivouac of his

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

own. There Barnegal bound up his friend's wound, and the two sat half the night and talked.

"But what brings you here, Charlie," said Roger after a time. "I thought you had gone to the northward to join Washington."

"I started to do so," answered his friend, "but upon thinking the matter over I changed my mind. I was going to the northward only for the purpose of finding fighting to do, and I found it more nearly at hand. I have been serving, since I saw you, as a volunteer in the command with which I am now marching. Without going into the militia or enlisting as a soldier I have been fighting at my own expense wherever there was fighting to do. I was with Lincoln on his campaign toward Augusta and have been with him ever since. I changed my mind for a reason which the time has come for me to tell you. You know a little something—you cannot help knowing a little something—with regard to the quarrel that I had with my uncle. It is only due to you that I should tell you somewhat more. My quarrel with him is that in a letter to your father he impugned the honor of my mother! Not that he charged her with any conscious wrong-doing—even he could not make such an accusa-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

tion as that—but he asserted that at the time she became my father's wife my father was already a married man, that her marriage was therefore void from the beginning and that I was a child born out of wedlock.

“ I do not believe this slander, and the more I think of the matter, the more confident I become that there is somewhere in the story a discoverable lie. I cannot imagine that a man so lost as he is to all concern for the good opinion of his fellowmen, and a man also so greedy of gain as he, would have hesitated to proclaim these facts—if they were facts—and to claim as his own the inheritance I received from my father. If he could have proved the statements he has now made to Colonel Alton, the courts would instantly have awarded him all the property that I call my own. He holds the memory of my mother and my father in the utmost detestation, and as for myself, you know how little love he bears me. I can conceive of no influence that could have restrained him from the course I have suggested if his statements were in any respect true.

“ And yet, I cannot disprove those statements. Whether they be true or false, the papers relating to them must unquestionably be in his possession if there are any papers. I

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

decided therefore to remain in Carolina, and to do here whatever of fighting I might for my country in the hope that his excessive brandy drinking may presently bring him into the valley of the shadow of death, and give me an opportunity to vindicate my father's honor and my mother's purity.

“ That alone I live for now. All else is lost to me in the world until that task shall be accomplished. You see how it is, Roger. When he dies—if I am at hand to claim the administration as next of kin, there will be none to dispute my right. Until the baseness of my birth is established in a court, I stand before the world not only as his next of kin, and therefore his heir, but as the only kinsman he has alive. As such I shall take possession of his house and estate the moment that he dies. I wish to go through his desks, his secretaries, his private drawers and every secret receptacle there may be at The Live Oaks. I wish to explore every nook and corner until I find every paper there that has ever been in his possession. Among them I hope to find proof that he has lied or at least to find out whether he has any proof of the truth of his statements. Then I shall publish both his lie and the refutation of it or the fact that there is no proof of it, if the

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

refutation is not there. That is what I live for now. That is why I have remained in Carolina.”

Roger expressed his sympathy with his friend's grief and determination in that silent way which strong men prefer to words. He grasped young Barnegal's hand and pressed it hard, saying nothing, but Barnegal quite understood. These two, comrades in their childhood, schoolmates and lifelong friends, had now become brothers in the truest sense of the word.

Their conversation drifted presently to Roger's condition and what was to be done.

The order, as has been said, had already come for the retirement of the little force which now alone constituted Lincoln's army. In other words, there was no further work of a military sort to be done for the time. It was necessary for Roger to find rest and medical treatment. His first thought was to disband his little force and go to Alton House.

“But Alton House, my dear boy,” said Charlie, “is seventy miles away. You can never stand so long a journey in your present condition. Lonsdale is here, almost at hand, less than ten miles distant at the farthest. I shall take you there. I have a fancy that your

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

nursing there will be inspired by a love as true and gentle as though you were in charge of Jacqueline herself."

It was so arranged, and the pair at last bade each other good-night, and stretched out their limbs for such rest as might be possible to them. To neither did sleep come, and after half an hour of pretence, young Barnegal lifted himself upon his elbow and said:

"By the way, Roger, have you any news from Lonsdale to tell me?"

"No," said the young man. "Nothing of a definite nature at least. I know only that just after I was summoned from home on this military duty, my father made a journey to Lonsdale and that he told Helen something that induces her to forbid our marriage. She has so written to me, but at least she wrote lovingly. It is doubly fortunate, therefore, that if I am to be laid up in a hospital for a few days it is to be at the home of the Vargaves."

Young Barnegal had this advantage over his friend. While his friend must lie awake throughout the night to conjecture what the morrow might bring forth, he himself had no morrow in prospect until that time when death should bring him again an opportunity. For that he must wait with what patience he could

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

command. He would gladly have hurried the day by killing his enemy like a dog, if that enemy could by any means have been provoked to personal war. He could not kill him otherwise without becoming a murderer, and it was no part of his purpose, his character or his history to indulge in thoughts of killing otherwise than in open combat. He had challenged his uncle, as we know and his uncle had insultingly refused even to receive his challenge. The young man had put upon his adversary all of affront that it is possible for one man to put upon another, by horsewhipping him in the presence of a witness, yet he had not succeeded in provoking him to battle.

Roger was thinking of these things as he lay there and they kept him awake. Barnegal had thought them all out long before, and was rapidly sinking into sleep when Roger spoke:

“What has your uncle ever done with regard to that horsewhipping you gave him?”

“Nothing, damn him,” answered young Barnegal. “The fact has never been mentioned. No white man in Carolina knows of it except you and me. Tiger Bill has taken pains that no report of it should ever get beyond the limits of his plantation, and I, of course, cannot with honor speak of it. Your tongue

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

is equally tied. Who else was there to report it to the community?"

"I wonder that the negroes have never tattled."

"They know better. His treatment of them is severe enough at best, and they know well enough what it would be should any whisper of an affair like that escape beyond the boundaries of the plantation without his permission. He would not wait to ascertain through whom the leakage of information had come. He would bring an iron heel down upon every one of them until their lives, already a burden, should become unendurable. They know him and they have kept silent."

Roger said nothing for a time, but after a while he said, more to himself than to his companion, "It is a dreadful pity."

"What is?" asked Barnegal.

"That nobody should know of the disgrace you have inflicted upon him. I have been turning the matter over in my mind trying to find a way by which I might with honor publish the facts. I can think of none unless perhaps I might relate them to some woman in strict confidence. I suppose that would secure their circulation. Still I cannot do even that. It is a pity. It is a pity. The horsewhipping was

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

a severe punishment, but it was not enough. Exposure should be added to it. Never mind, old fellow, never mind. Wait, wait, wait. All things come to him, you know, who waits, and all things will come to you—Jacqueline at the head of them all.”

And so the friends at last ceased talking and got what they might of sleep. In the morning, young Barnegal, who was under nobody’s command, took orders from nobody, and had not to seek anybody’s permission to do as he pleased, departed from the camp with his friend in charge. Marlborough, who had followed his master at every step permitted to him, rode on the other side and the two supported young Alton between them for he was very faint from pain and loss of blood.

Before their departure from the camp, Roger had bidden his men good-by and sent them to their homes, first taking in his memorandum book the addresses of all of them, saying:

“I shall be well presently, boys, and I shall need you again;” to which one of them, speaking for all, sadly responded:

“We hope so, Cap’n, and when you need us we will be there.”

XXII

UNDER *the* IRON HEEL

WHEN Roger arrived at Lonsdale, he was almost unconscious from fever. Mrs. Vargave had him put to bed at once and sent for a surgeon, who found the wound in a state of dangerous inflammation. It had been very imperfectly cleansed and scarcely dressed at all, and was now in a condition which the doctor called "angry." Roger impatiently demanded of him that he should restore him at once, or, at the most, within a day or two, to full health and vigor.

"A little scratch like that," he said, "ought not to disable a perfectly healthy young man like me. It is nonsense to talk of keeping me here, as you do, for an indefinite period. Do something, do something, do something!"

Clearly, the young man was out of temper, if not quite out of his mind. The surgeon calmly shook his head and said:

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“ You are lucky, Captain Alton, to be in quarters so good as these, and with such nurses as Mrs. Vargave and her daughter to attend you. Permit me to congratulate you upon that, and let me warn you not to be in too great haste to get well. If you are prudent and cautious, and especially if you sufficiently restrain your impatience - of inaction, you may be strong enough within three months or so to ride to Alton House, but if you are not patient, if you try to hurry things, if you overtax your strength, I will not answer for the consequences.”

With that he quitted the room without waiting for the angry reply which his patient was moved to give him, and the anger, denied expression in words, expended itself in an access of fever which quickly rendered the young man half deliriously unconscious.

The physician's prediction with regard to the wound proved to be correct. Week after week the young man lay in bed, or sat propped up with pillows in an armchair, too weak to talk, too weary to think, too dull in his mind even to aspire. It was only as he began to grow better that he began to worry.

He was eager to have a talk with Helen, but that discreet young lady, more attentive than he

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

to the commands of the physician, took measures to prevent his indulgence in anything so rash. She went many times a day to the chamber that he occupied and gave minute and loving attention to all the details of nursing, but she went always accompanied by her maid, and upon leaving, always left the maid behind with duties enough to perform to keep her there for some minutes at least after her own departure.

Sometimes in his weakness, Roger, resented all this, and showed his resentment upon Helen's next coming by a certain querulousness of voice which, as a strong man, had never been habitual with him. Helen knew what his peevishness meant, and she knew for what he was longing, but she knew also much better than he did, what was good for him. And so when his exasperation grew greater than usual over her careful avoidance of private conversation, she checked, and, in a sense rebuked it, by delaying her next coming until he had had time to learn better manners.

In the course of a few months, however, he grew so far stronger as to contemplate an almost immediate return to Alton House, whence Jacqueline had made two visits to Lonsdale to look after him. It was then that Helen de-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

cided to let him have the conversation with her for which she knew that he was so impatiently longing.

It was a sad conversation, with little in it to comfort either of them, except that it bore to each precious assurances of love from the other. Helen could tell Roger nothing with regard to his father's visit to her mother, except that after it was over, her mother had said things to her which she now repeated to Roger thus:

“Roger, you remember what I told you about my grandfather? You remember that he bade me always hearken to whatever advice Colonel Alton might give me? You remember how greatly he esteemed him, how earnestly he used to say that Geoffrey Alton was the noblest man in the world, the bravest, the truest, the best? Well, Colonel Alton said to my mother, ‘Tell Helen this: that I love her as I love my own daughter; that nothing in all this world, nothing that fate could bring me, would please me better than to have her the wife of my only son, the mother of all the Altons who are to come after me. If that might be, I would make any sacrifice to accomplish it, but, unhappily, it may not be. It is not I upon whom the sacrifice in that case would fall. It is true that if Roger married

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

Helen, harm would come to all the Altons succeeding me. But that I should brave and endure if that were all. Unhappily it is not all. If Roger and Helen contract a marriage, hurt would come to the dearest dead you know. For the sake of the dead, I ask Helen to forbid this marriage which I myself have not the heart to forbid.'

"That was all he said, Roger, at least it was all that my mother reported to me. I think she knows what he meant. I do not know, but little things that she has dropped from time to time in her grief over this matter, have suggested to me that somehow all this is connected with my father's death or disappearance five years ago, and with that trouble that your father had with the court. It seems that my father must somehow have been associated with that—that it was to protect my father's name and memory that your father took the risks he did on that occasion. I do not know, Roger. These things are all blind to me. Only one thing is clear, and that is, that it is my duty to you, to Colonel Alton, to my mother, and to my dead father, to say that I can never be your wife, unless and until Colonel Alton shall say that these things are past and dead and buried. Let the matter rest here, Roger. It

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

pains me to talk about it. Do not interrupt me now, please. You are not strong enough to argue, and I have no wish to argue. I want only to go to my bedchamber and weep. Good-by, Roger, I shall not see you again before you go. Spare me a farewell! I love you, as your wife." And with that she left the room, manifestly broken-hearted.

The young man, now recovering some of the eagerness of his youth and strength, would have followed her, but that he knew the uselessness and the folly and the cruelty of it. He sat in his chair instead, and sobbed as he had never done before since he had put off the pinafores of infancy. Life had brought him up to a blind wall through which no opening appeared, and over which no strength that he had could vault.

It was in the early days of August that the young man set out, accompanied by Marlborough, on his way to Alton House. He was confident now of a speedy recovery, and of his ability to take the field again early in the autumn. His purpose was to find surcease of sorrow in the very hardest fighting that he could anywhere find to do. But on his homeward journey, he learned that he was much weaker still than he had imagined, and

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

on his arrival at Alton House he went immediately to bed and into a fever. For month after month he continued alternately ill and convalescent. Summer ripened into autumn. Autumn dozed listlessly in a purple and golden glory of soft, velvety weather; Christmas came, with its besom of frosts to sweep the haze of Indian summer from the sunshine, and the January spring-time came again, and Roger was a prisoner still at Alton House, unfit for anything more active than a brief morning ride on particularly favorable days.

He had missed much of the fighting and adventure. The siege of Savannah by the combined American and French forces, and the splendid assault in which Pulaski fell, a sacrifice to his own heroic daring, were matters of history now, and Roger had had no part in making the events. But his strength was coming back, and the occasion for his resumption of his work was drawing near.

With the spring came a menace of sharper warfare than any the south had yet known. On the eleventh of February, Arbuthnot and Clinton,—the one commanding the British fleet and the other the British army sent southward from the north,—appeared off Edisto Inlet. Making a landing, they entrenched themselves on Wap-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

poo Cut, a narrow inlet which connects Charleston Harbor with the Stono River, and separates James Island from the mainland.

Sir Henry Clinton was an abler man than Prevost, and he commanded a much larger and finer army. The force he had brought with him from New York numbered five thousand men, and, when to these were added the British troops already on the coast, and large numbers of tories, the force that threatened Charles Town by land was a very formidable one indeed. It was to operate in conjunction with the fleet also, and against the combined attack. General Lincoln could oppose but fourteen hundred men, and a little flotilla of boats wholly incapable of making a stand against the heavily armed cruisers of the British.

Obviously, Charles Town was doomed. Lincoln's first thought was to evacuate the city, and thus save his little army for future use in the field. He thought it possible that, upon retiring to the upper country, he might collect a sufficient army to return and drive the enemy out of the capital. Whether he could have accomplished this or not, is uncertain, but it is evident now that evacuation would have been the better course. Had Clinton pushed his attack with any degree of vigor, that course

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

would have been adopted. But with all his advantages, Clinton hesitated just as Prevost had done. He remained a full month on the Wap-poo within cannon shot, or almost that, of the town, and when, on the twenty-eighth of March he at last moved forward to besiege the city, Lincoln had good reason to expect a speedy and strong reinforcement, with some help from the Spanish West Indies, wherefore he determined to remain and stand the siege.

Upon the approach of the enemy, the legislature added still further to the enormous powers it had already conferred upon Governor Rutledge. When it was decided that resistance should be made, it was not in the nature of the gallant John Rutledge to resist feebly. Lincoln was military chief, of course, upon whom the conduct of the defence would depend, but it was for Rutledge to add as largely as possible to his resources, and never was there a man better fitted for the work than he. His power was absolute over both men and materials. Not property alone, but human life and human death also were at his unchecked disposal. He provisioned the city, but in doing so took care not to impoverish the country. He prepared the militia, for effective service, and threw as large a body of them into the Charles Town trenches

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

as could be effectively used there, but he exercised a wise discretion in refusing to denude any part of the country of its young men to such an extent as to leave it defenceless. No man was ever clothed with more unlimited power than he at this time possessed, and no man ever used power more wisely or more faithfully to the purpose for which it was given. But in spite of all Charles Town fell. After a gallant resistance, extending over many weeks, General Lincoln was fairly forced to surrender the city and with it his army.

Then came Carolina's night of blackness. The British had never learned, and were not now disposed to learn to regard the patriots as armed foes, engaged in legitimate warfare. They regarded them, instead, as the sheriff regards rioters, as the courts hold men who refuse to obey their mandates, as the law regards the law-breaker. It seems to have been impossible for the British commanders in Carolina at that time, and especially for Lord Cornwallis—who soon succeeded Clinton there—to understand that faith-keeping with the rebels was an obligation; that promises made to them were promises to be fulfilled; that paroles exacted of them and given by them, carried with them all the rights and privileges promised in the offering

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

of the parole. In the eyes of these British commanders, the patriots were rebels to be punished. They were criminals to be hunted down, and to be dealt with by the high hand of force. They were vermin to be exterminated.

Thus, when Charles Town fell, and its people, as well as its garrison, became prisoners of war, it was stipulated that all the militiamen and all citizens who should give their parole, might go to their homes and live there in peace, so long as they did not violate their promise not to serve against the king again. Yet when this promise was accepted, and the men making it were faithfully keeping it, the British commanders added, one after another, new conditions to it and enforced them by imprisonment or deportation, until many of those who had pledged themselves not again to serve, were fairly forced to disregard their paroles, and take the field, or go instead into hopeless exile, or to a pestilential prison.

The republic in which we live owes much indeed to this treachery and brutish insensibility to honor on the part of Lord Cornwallis and his lieutenants, especially the butcher Tarleton. Had they kept faith, there would still have been a partisan war in the Carolinas, but it would have had far less of determination

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

in it than it had in fact. It would have been waged with far less of relentless vigor, and many of those who most actively and courageously participated in it, with a price set upon their heads, and, as it were, with nooses around their necks, would have remained quietly at home under a parole which they at least had given in all sincerity, but from which they justly thought themselves released by the utter disregard of its terms on the part of their captors.

It is not the purpose of the present writer to relate the history of that splendidly heroic age. That task has fallen to abler pens than his. The facts of history are here mentioned only in so far as they gave rise to the incidents recorded in this romance, and may serve to explain its events.

XXIII

WAR'S *new* BIRTH

IN surrendering Charles Town, Lincoln was forced to surrender not only his army, but all of the civilians likewise. A very few escaped, for the lines had been tightly drawn for weeks. Young Barnegal had fought in the trenches as long as the struggle lasted, and when it was over, and surrender was agreed upon, he was wholly unwilling to become himself a part of the sacrifice. He was prepared to face any danger, and endure any hardship, rather than submit to be a prisoner of war in the loathsome quarters which the British were then accustomed to use as military prisons, and he had no faith whatever that if he accepted a parole he would be permitted to live unmolested under its terms.

He foresaw what afterward happened to many in Carolina, as already related. He had no stomach for imprisonment in any shape. He resolved to escape at all hazards.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

Before undertaking this he wrote hurriedly to a friend in Charles Town who had sought to dissuade him. His note ran as follows :

“ I have set out to fight for the privilege of being a free man. I have risked my life as all the rest of us have, in that behalf. And life is not more precious to me now than it has been all along. Why then should I not risk it again, rather than surrender my freedom? Moreover, even if I could trust the British parole, I do not want its protection. I do not want to live in secure idleness while my country is being overrun and subjected to a foreign domination. I will, therefore, make an effort to escape from this trap, and in that effort, only death shall cause me to fail.”

Quitting the ranks, he concealed himself in a fisherman's hut on the Ashley River, which had been abandoned since the bombardment had begun. For two days and nights he lay there without food, or even a chance to get water. The British were swarming on the opposite shore, and were patrolling the shore on which he lay, their lines having been extended into and around the city. The little hut lay just outside the outer line; and so, the young man for two days escaped capture, or rather escaped the necessity of making the desperate final bat-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

tle which he had determined upon as the alternative to capture, and the only alternative he would accept.

On the third night, the British seemed satisfied that their work of occupation was complete, and greatly relaxed their vigilance along the shores. About midnight young Barnegal slipped out under cover of darkness, and aided by a thick fog which lay over the harbor and the city, managed to reach a little well which had served the fisherman, and there slaked his parching thirst. Then, taking off his shoes, he crept quietly through the fog to the margin of the river, and there still further lightened his burden of clothing by removing his hat and coat. Very quietly, and with as little splashing as possible, he let himself into the river, thronged as it always is at that season of the year with man-eating sharks and other enemies which the boldest swimmers do not care to encounter.

The river at that point is very wide, and the enemy, as he knew, occupied its southern bank. But Barnegal's plan was to meet one difficulty at a time, and the river was the first difficulty. Swimming as noiselessly as possible, he at last, near morning, reached the southern shore. He was chilled through to the bone, water-soaked,

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

of course, bare-headed, bare-footed, and weary beyond expression, for the swim he had made was twice at least as great as any he had ever undertaken before. The friendly darkness and the still friendlier fog served him well. He went into the tall marsh grass which grew thickly along the shores, and, as the tide was out, he threw himself down in the ooze for a little needed rest. "The incoming tide will awake me," he thought to himself, "if I fall asleep, and it should be coming in before the morning breaks."

When the rising water lapped his feet and aroused him an hour or two later, he was at first bewildered with faintness, hunger, and his excessive weariness, but he presently gathered together enough of his wits to know that he must be up and doing if he hoped to complete the work of escape. The enemy were now posted almost entirely upon the main, and so the young fugitive swam across Wappoo cut to James Island. There, passing through the woods, he at last reached Stono Inlet, and crossed that to John's Island. He was sure now that he was south of the enemy's position, and as he was utterly exhausted by starvation, he determined to recross to the mainland at a point still farther south. Having secured food

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

at the hands of a friendly negro, he wrapped his feet in the long gray moss that there abounds, and proceeded on his journey.

It was in this plight that he at last reached Alton House, bringing with him the first definite news that had been received there of the surrender of the city and army. After he had been fed and clothed, Colonel Alton peremptorily ordered him to bed and to absolute silence until he should be recovered of his fatigue. It was not until the following day that he reappeared, dressed in Roger's garments, and told fully the story of which he had given only the briefest possible outline on the day before.

"The event is altogether the worst disaster that has yet befallen the American cause," he said by way of comment. "The fall of Charles Town is the fall of South Carolina, if not the fall of the entire South."

"How so," asked Roger, who had just been discharged from the doctor's hands, as at last well and ready to get strong. "I see no reason for surrendering South Carolina merely because the British have taken our capital and seaport."

"Why, Roger, we have no army left, and the demoralization of the people is terrible. The enemy is already spreading over the coun-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

try, establishing posts. By dint of terrifying some and cajoling others, they have made more than half the people already swear allegiance to the king. The state is prostrate and helpless, and those of us who are not ready to choose between taking the oath of allegiance and going to a prison ship, must quit Carolina at once, as I am going to do."

"You were in Charles Town at the time of the surrender?" asked Roger.

"Certainly."

"You got away, didn't you?"

"Of course. What do you mean? How else could I be here?"

"I mean only this—that a young man who could escape from a long beleaguered and at last surrendered city, across a bridgeless river, and through lines which the British had spent weeks in drawing tighter and tighter, might manage, I think, to stay in South Carolina and do some little fighting here, in spite of all the efforts of a scattered foe to catch him, or to drive him away. If we, who are not ready—who never mean to be ready—to swear allegiance to King George, quit the state, then is Carolina indeed conquered, but I, for one, shall stay here, and not only stay, but fight, too, till I fall. It is no time to run away. Carolina

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

needs every one of us now, and moreover, if we go away and leave the British in undisturbed possession, they will first establish themselves firmly here, and then march northward, crushing the patriots of the other colonies as between two millstones. We shall then have nowhere on earth to which we can flee."

"Roger," replied Charles, speaking in a low, but very earnest tone, "have you forgotten what I told you in the woods the night you were wounded?"

"No, Charles, I have not."

"You will understand me and believe me then, when I say that no man can be more anxious than I am to stay here in Carolina. Now tell me frankly what you mean, and how it can be done."

"I will tell you," said Roger, "and after that I'll show you, too, if you'll join me. John's Island is only a small spot on the map of Carolina, and yet I stayed there a month, with twenty men, when the British army there had nothing to do but catch me, and more than that, my stay cost the British a good many men and horses, to say nothing of lost time and expended energies. The swamps of Carolina afford 'cover' for a great deal of game which no huntsman can drive out, and why shouldn't you

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

and I and some hundreds of other bold young fellows succeed as well, with our educated intellects, as the poor deer do with their instincts, in eluding the vigilance of the pursuers? We must take to the swamps and live there, with such fellows as we may be able to take with us; and from the swamps we must sally forth and strike wherever a point of weakness invites a blow. As Marion once phrased it,—by the way, where is Marion? He must be our leader, if we can find him.”

“Nobody knows,” replied Barnegal. “He was at home with a broken ankle when Charles Town fell, but he has disappeared—taken to the swamps, people say. But if that be so, he must have faithful friends with him, for he can neither walk nor stand. Just before the siege of Charles Town began, he was supping with a party in the city, in an upper room. After the bad fashion that exists among us, his host locked the door, determined that none of his guests should leave until all of them should be too drunk to leave. Marion, you know, is very abstemious, and he had no mind to be forced into a debauch, so he quietly slipped through a window and dropped to the ground, breaking his ankle in doing so. He was at home nursing the injured joint when Charles Town fell.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

But come; I like your idea, and want no better leader than you, Roger. I have heard of your exploits on the Island, and I fancy you know this sort of partisan business quite as well as another. But how are you to hide until you get well? The British are moving up this way, and will be here to-morrow, I fear."

"I shall be ready, then. I have a friend or two living not far away—brave fellows, who were with me on the island. Let me send for them to come here. Then we'll easily find out just when the red coats approach, and—we'll take to the swamps together."

"My dear brother," said Jacqueline, entering the room at the moment, "what are you talking about? You are a sick man, my patient, and I shall not allow you to think of going anywhere until you are well again."

"Not even to prison?" asked Roger.

"I do not understand," she replied.

"Why, that's the alternative. If I don't go to the swamps, I must go to prison; for I will never swear to be a loyal subject of Georgius rex, my dear."

"But why can't you stay quietly at home?" asked the young woman.

"For the reason, my dear sister, that His Gracious Majesty's brave soldiers are afraid of

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

patriots, even when they are sick and at home. Bring your portfolio, won't you, sister, and write a note or two for me, and send for Marlborough to saddle a horse and report."

"Certainly, my lord general. 'Report' is essentially military, I think, and I'll issue your 'general order No. 1', and then 'report in person at these headquarters,' to act as your—what do you call it,—adjutant, isn't it?"

And with that she playfully patted Roger's cheek before quitting the room.

Marlborough delivered the notes, and just at nightfall three sinewy fellows mounted on little half-bred horses, and armed with holster pistols, swords and long rifles, rode up to Alton House. They were "common" people in the parlance of the time and country; that is to say they were plain, uneducated men, overseers or small farmers perhaps, with no claims to social recognition at such a mansion as Alton House. But Roger received them cordially as his friends and comrades, meeting them in the porch and ushering them as guests into the supper room where Jacqueline courtesied in answer to the awkward bow of each quite as if these had been the stateliest gentlemen in the land. Jacqueline Alton was a lady, you see, and she honored whomsoever might come as

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

an invited guest into the mansion of which she was mistress.

The men shrank back at first, awed quite as much perhaps by the dazzling beauty of the richly dressed young hostess as by the novel surroundings, but Roger came promptly to their assistance.

“These are my friends, sister,” he said by way of introduction, “my comrades-in-arms. Mr. Hadley, Mr. Burton, Mr. Frost—my sister, gentlemen. You are just in time for supper.”

Mistress Jacqueline honored these men as patriots and brave soldiers, of whose prowess and faithfulness Roger had fully informed her. She welcomed them also as his friends, and I verily believe she took greater pleasure in entertaining them, plain fellows as they were, than she would have felt had they been men of the highest social rank. That fine gentlemen should do battle for their country was to her quite a matter of course—they had family, name, estates and reputation to maintain. But these plain fellows had no such incentive, and their courage in such a cause she deemed the loftiest heroism—as perhaps it was.

After supper Roger explained his plans to the men.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“ I must go back to the swamps—not merely as a precaution against arrest, but for the sake of keeping up the struggle and annoying the enemy as much as possible. I want to take with me as many good men as I can—especially as many of my old Island volunteers as can be found. I have sent for you, therefore, to join me because I knew I could depend upon you. Now, who else is there we can get? ”

The men entered heartily into the plans of their captain, and before morning Roger Alton was again chief of a little band numbering something more than a score of daring and determined men. Barnegal was his only lieutenant, and as it was desirable for Roger on account of his health to remain at Alton House as long as possible, Barnegal took two of the men and rode away early in the morning to ascertain the movements of the enemy. Meantime Roger kept the rest of his company together to be ready for immediate marching.

About noon Barnegal reported the British within five miles of Alton House, encamped, and sending out “ small bodies ” of cavalry in every direction.

“ How small? ” said Roger, in the sententious and rather imperious manner which he had unconsciously adopted in conversation on

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

military matters; for his whole soul was in this war, and to him it was a personal affair which stirred his anger and made of him not so much a soldier with a duty to do as an insulted gentleman bent upon resenting and resisting in vindication of his personal right; and insulted gentlemen are apt to speak shortly and sharply even to their friends. "How small?"

"Well, some of the bodies number ten, some twenty, and some more," replied Barnegal. "They are ordinary scouting parties, sent out, I fancy, to scour the country and pick up stray patriots and poultry. (We had better betake ourselves to the swamps at once if we don't intend to be caught.)"

"We are not foxes," said Roger, buckling on his sword. "We can fight as well as run, and the swamp is our base of operations—not merely a refuge from danger. Pardon me, Charles, you have seen only regular, systematic war. I am a partisan—an outlaw, the British say—and I will show you what the books neglect to teach: that in such a country as this, a little band of bold fellows may wage little wars of their own without any very great danger of capture. We will strike at one or two of these scouting parties, if you please, by way of intimating to their commanders that

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

Carolina is not conquered yet as they imagine that it is, and we will ride away to the swamps when we must. Luckily, my men know every by-path hereabout. Bid the men mount, please."

A moment later the young cavalier was riding at the head of his little company. Inquiring at every opportunity, and scanning the road for tracks, he was not long in discovering that a party of British, well mounted, had gone to the neighboring plantation of Beverly bent upon plunder perhaps.

"Examine the road, Burton," said Roger, to a tall, gaunt, bullet-headed fellow, whose small restless eyes were given to a minute study of everything about him at once. "Examine the road and tell me how many there are of those fellows."

Without a word Burton discharged an exhausted quid of tobacco from further service, and dismounting walked forward a dozen yards or so scanning the confused hoof-marks in the sand, of which a less skilled observer could have made nothing whatever. Returning he said:

"They's twenty-eight or thirty uv 'em in all; hosses all big, an' five uv 'em's thoroughbreds, or purty nigh it. They ain't lookin' fer no

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

soldiers, though, but huntin' plunder. If they wuz expectin' fightin' men, they wouldn't ride all over the road as they're adoin'."

"Very well," said Roger, "mount your horse. Now men, attention. We are all pretty well armed, but some of our horses are scrubby, and one or two of you have no pistols. This party ahead of us has good horses and plenty of arms, and it will be our own fault if we fail to supply ourselves abundantly at their expense. Burton finds that they are riding carelessly, irregularly, 'all over the road' as he puts it, and assumes very properly that they do not expect to encounter anything more belligerent than a hen-roost or a sideboard or a sucking pig. At Beverly they will leave their horses with one or two guards, or possibly no guards at all, while they search the cellar and chicken-coops. Half of them will leave their pistols in their holsters. We must approach through the grove and charge from the edge of it. Then let every man who sees a better horse than the one he is riding, capture it and mount it. Turn the old ones loose as we cannot afford to lead horses. Let no man fire until we are fired upon, but use your sabres instead. The enemy outnumbers us, and everything depends upon the completeness of the surprise."

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

In obedience to a brief order or two, the little company filed off through the woods. Silently they rode over the sandy soil of the pine barren for half an hour, then through a grove of low hanging oaks, till they reached its edge, when Roger in a low tone, scarcely louder than a whisper, said:

“Forward. Keep line. Open order; draw sabres; gallop; CHARGE!”

The last word rang out at the top of the young chief's voice, and ten seconds later he and his men fell upon a group of dismounted and terror-stricken cavalrymen who had been left with the horses of the whole body. Their sabre strokes fell fast and furious for a time. Then Roger called out: “Provide yourselves with arms and horses, men, and stampede all the rest.”

It was no sooner said than done. The half dozen guardsmen had promptly thrown down their arms, and it was the work of only a moment, to send the released and frightened horses helter skelter through the woodlands, a task in which the British, pouring out of the house, themselves unintentionally assisted by delivering an otherwise ineffectual fire from such arms as they had with them.

“These are light horse troops and have

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

no rifles," said Roger eagerly to his lieutenant. "They have emptied their pistols, and on foot their swords are useless. We will make absentees of them at roll-call to-night." And, giving a few, rapid orders, he led his men again to the charge.

The onset was furious, and the helpless dismounted men were speedily driven—as their horses had been—to the neighboring woods, leaving several of their comrades on the field, stricken down by the whirling sabres—quite half of which, had been fashioned in a blacksmith's shop, out of scythe blades. When the melee ended, Roger formed his men in front of the mansion whose mistress—a neighbor, a patriot, and a friend of his own—hastily brought forth decanters and glasses.

"We must drink and away," said the young chief. "Here's to Carolina, country and liberty. May we prove faithful to all three."

Crack! went a rifle from the bushes near-by. Crack-crack-crack-crack-crack!

"Them's not red coats, them's tories," said Burton the observer and oracle. "Red coats don't shoot rifles, and they don't fight every feller for hissef, nuther."

There was no time for discussion. The tory

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

company which had come up was much too formidable for Roger's party in point of arms and numbers, and it was clearly their purpose to capture the little band of partisans. Seeing the situation at a glance, Roger wheeled his force about and attempted to gallop away; but he had fallen into a trap. A deep, sluggish stream lay in the rear of the house and the Tories had stretched themselves in a strong line around the three other sides. There was no escape except by swimming the stream. Well aimed bullets whistled around the heads of the patriots as they plunged into the water, but all escaped to the opposite bank where they halted to cheer. They did so too soon, however, for as they shouted they were greeted with a shower of musket balls from the timber on that side of the river on which they stood. They had crossed the stream only to fall into an ambuscade. Tories or troops—they could not at the moment determine which—were in the strip of low ground through which Roger had been confident of escape, and his party was completely hemmed in.

“What are we going to do now,” asked one of the men, a new recruit who had seen nothing of war.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“ We are going to die like men if we can't do anything better,” said Barnegal, who was now thoroughly aroused ; “ but we are going to fight like devils first.”

XXIV

IN WHICH

an enthusiastic YOUNG GENTLEMAN *saves a*
HUNDRED GUINEAS

ROGER ALTON was accustomed to carry a perfectly cool head upon his broad shoulders under all circumstances. Being a not very imaginative young man, and being possessed of an excellent digestion, it was never his habit to exaggerate dangers which must be encountered unseen. He calculated probabilities and weighed facts with the utmost precision, but he added little to the probabilities and nothing to the facts by excited conjecture. Half a dozen musket balls coming from a thicket meant to him half a dozen men certainly, or perhaps a few more, as circumstances might indicate. And by "men" in the military sense he understood so many frightened fellows who fired at random quite half of the time and usually too high to do any damage. He knew, as every soldier does, that a bullet whose

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

whistling sounded in his ears was harmless, having already passed him by, but unlike persons of less steady nerves he held this knowledge practically, and gave no heed whatever to such escaped dangers. Better than all, he was too manly a fellow to care particularly for danger of death in so good a cause, and so he gave himself no concern in peril, on his own account at least.

War was to him a grand game in which manhood and liberty were the stakes. He played to win these, recking little of the pawns it might be necessary to sacrifice to the winning of the game, even though one of those pawns should chance to be named Roger Alton. But he knew the value of the pawns, too, and he took care to throw none away uselessly, wherefore he was careful so to dispose his men at the present moment as to screen them pretty effectually from the fire, a task rendered easier by the oncoming of night.

“Halt the men here, Barnegal,” said Roger, “while I go forward and see how matters stand. Let no man reply to the fire of the enemy. Let us keep them in ignorance and perhaps in terror too. I will return presently.” Then tossing his bridle to a trooper, he walked away. The musket flashes followed each other

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

in rapid and regular succession, wherefore Roger assumed that his enemy on this side of the river was a body of regulars, but by a careful noting of the points from which the shots came, he speedily discovered that their numbers were not very large, probably thirty or forty in all, and that their line was a thin one stretched over a great deal more ground than it could properly hold. The men were placed in a semi-circle with flanks resting on the river. To accomplish this they stood at intervals of twenty or thirty feet, as Roger discovered by observing their fire.

“They are attempting too much,” he said to his lieutenant on his return. “They are afraid to charge us in the dark. Their line is a very thin one and we will break through it. I will take half the men, while you keep the rest here in absolute silence. When I attack, the red coats will thicken up their line over there on the right and you can break through at the other end. If I don’t get through I will wheel about and follow you.”

The plan seemed the best one possible under the circumstances, and after agreeing upon a rendezvous Roger led half the men to the attack. When he was but a hundred yards from the river bank, the enemy rapidly contracted

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

their line toward the point of his attack and when he rode forward at a gallop received him with a heavy fire which checked his advance very decidedly. He might even yet have broken through, however, if the distance between him and the British had been great enough to admit of his regaining speed—for in charging through infantry a body of horsemen must depend chiefly upon momentum. As it was he quickly wheeled about in the direction of the point where Barnegal had succeeded in breaking through.

Unluckily, the commander of the British force appears to have been a quick-witted fellow. When Barnegal escaped on the left, Roger's whole plan was revealed to his enemy, and that enemy, rightly judging that Roger's party alone remained within his toils, sharply contracted his line all around, narrowing his semi-circle to a quarter of its former length, and so strengthening it at all points.

A heavy fire at short range greeted the partisans now from every side except from the river in the rear. Our young man's case seemed indeed desperate. Barnegal, observing the fact that the fire increased instead of ceasing, wheeled about and attempted to go to his friend's rescue, by breaking into the semi-cir-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

cle out of which he had just succeeded in forcing his way, but he dared not use his rifles lest Roger's party should suffer. He rode forward and succeeded in drawing attention to himself from that part of the line at which Roger's first attack had been made.

"Come, boys, this is our opportunity!" cried Roger. "Barnegal will hold their attention for a minute or two, long enough to let us swim past. Follow me."

Bullet plunged into the stream. The rest followed; and as horses swimming make no noise after the first plunge, the point of danger was passed without discovery.

Barnegal was still busy and the British were still pouring a heavy fire into the empty thicket whence the patriots had escaped down the river, when Roger's party, having made land below, galloped up and joined Barnegal's in safety.

"It is time to die like men," shouted Barnegal. "I am going to break through that line or lose every man trying. *I have a hundred golden guineas that belong to the man who first shakes Roger Alton's hand!*"

"Well, that man is Charles Barnegal," said Roger, coming up and shaking hands with his friend. "Attention men! Follow me!"

The command was untechnical, but five min-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

utes' riding served to put the little band out of danger in the depths of the great swamp. Three or four of them carried British bullets in their bodies, but not one had fallen from his saddle, and not one was sufficiently hurt to require more of attention than the rude, amateur surgery of a partisan camp could furnish.

XXV

CAPTAIN JACK'S DEVICES

THE distressing situation which Mrs. Vargave had foreshadowed when Roger was first at Lonsdale had now come upon the Carolinas. Systematic war had been changed to that cruelest of all things known, a civil war, in which neighbor was arrayed against neighbor, and private vengeance sometimes played a larger part than conviction of any sort in inspiring action. Men of the baser sort everywhere had sought security for themselves by yielding allegiance to Great Britain. They had hoped thus to make an end of war in the south, and rest securely at their ease. In this hope they were disappointed.

The patriots, as we have seen, were not yet ready to give up the struggle. Soon after Roger Alton's band began its work of annoyance, other such bodies were called into being in different parts of the state. Among these was the

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

little force rallied by Sumter which under inspiration of his repeated victories was soon swelled into a strong brigade of six hundred men or more.

The British too were completely disappointed. When Sir Henry Clinton, having captured Charles Town, sailed away north leaving Cornwallis in command of four thousand troops, it was his confident expectation that the tories would speedily form a force in Carolina sufficiently strong to keep that state in permanent subjection without the aid of regulars. It was his plan when that should occur to have Cornwallis push northwards to the conquest of North Carolina and Virginia, but the partisans checked and delayed this movement seriously. And meantime, Washington soon sent an army of Continentals and militia back into the state which, under Gates, at first and later under Greene, speedily revived the war there upon regular lines.

All this while the tories were organizing and marauding, partly for the purpose of overawing the whigs, but in many cases with a larger view to personal vengeance upon offending neighbors, to the persecution of whigs, the destruction of property, and in some cases, plain unvarnished robbery. It is to the credit

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

of the little bands of partisans that, although the organized and fighting Tories outnumbered them considerably, the patriot cause at no time ceased to be the dominant one in status and in achievement. Marion and Pickens soon added their tremendous vigor to that of Sumter and the smaller patriotic bands.

Thus the whole state was plunged into ceaseless, merciless, cruel civil war. It was a fearful price to pay, but its reward of independence amply made it good. For while Cornwallis was usually victorious in formal fights, he was baffled and beaten on his road to Virginia, and rested at last at Yorktown more in the attitude of a commander seeking refuge for his over-matched army than as a victor whose purpose is accomplished. On the other hand, he had left behind him in the Carolinas a patriot force under Greene which, within a year or a little more soon practically reconquered the state. And long before a treaty of peace was made, the Carolinians had the joy of seeing the British driven out of their capital, and the authority of their state restored.

All this is a wonder-story of heroism, daring, and almost inconceivable endurance. It is told in history, in song and in story. It is no part of the present writer's task to repeat it

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

here beyond this meagre outline. But all this came later than the present stage of our story. At present all was blackness and night, and the torch of liberty was kept dimly burning only by such bands as that of Roger Alton.

Roger Alton's force fluctuated in numbers as did all the little patriot bands of that time. Men were killed and other men took their places. Men were drawn off by one consideration or another for service elsewhere. Roger's force was sometimes depleted in this and other ways until it scarcely amounted to a squad. At other times it was swelled to proportions sufficient to enable him to fight considerable actions.

When he had first gone out in this way, Marlborough had come to him with an earnest, almost a tearful petition to go with him.

"Why, Marlborough, I shall be but a poor hunted swamp fox, a soldier in arms, living as best I can, and dispensing with all the luxuries of life. I cannot afford to go about with a serving man like a fine gentleman; for I am no longer that; I'm only a plain, simple, hard-living and hard-fighting soldier."

"But, Mas' Roger," broke in the negro, "you want men and you can't get 'nuff of 'em. I could be a soldier as well as your servant and

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

I could be both at the same time. If you will let me go with you, I'll promise you I will fight as hard as anybody in the company. And when the fightin's over, I will look after your hosses and your boots, sir, and if you should get wounded again, you would need me to see to it that you didn't die o' neglect. The poor white gentlemen that you's mostly got with you don't know how to take care o' a gentleman when he's sick or wounded. Thank the Lord, I've been brought up to know. You'll let me go with you, won't you, Mas' Roger?"

Roger thought the matter over. He did indeed need every extra man that he could get, and here was Marlborough, strong, hardy, willing, and certainly courageous. Why not make a soldier of him? There was not only nothing in the law of Carolina to forbid that, but on the contrary, the statutes there had long sought to encourage the enlistment of faithful negroes as soldiers for the state's defence. It had been enacted that men of color might be enlisted in any company up to the limit of one-half the company's total number. It had been further provided by law that the master of any slave who should refuse to permit his enlistment should be liable to criminal prosecution and punishment. The ability of negro troops

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

to "fight nobly" and their willingness to fight for the country which they have always regarded as their own, is no new thing in the history of this land. From the beginning indeed the better men among the negroes have been willing volunteers in the country's defence whenever permitted that privilege of manhood. Andrew Jackson fully realized this, and when at New Orleans he was called upon to improvise a ragamuffin army with which to repel the assault of 12,000 of Wellington's choicest troops under command of no less a general than Sir Edward Pakenham, one of his first acts was to issue a proclamation calling upon the negroes to volunteer in defence of the city.

Marlborough became Captain Alton's soldier-servant.

In such warfare as this in Carolina, where one's neighbors chiefly constituted his enemies, and where the movements of small bands—either of tories or of troops—gave opportunity now and then for the delivery of a blow, means of securing information, accurate, prompt, and trustworthy, became a matter of the first importance. To this part of the service Jacqueline devoted herself. She lovingly said to her brother on the occasion of one of his early visits to Alton House:

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“I know you do not think me of any account, Roger, because I am a woman, and a woman cannot fight; or at least you think she cannot. If you would let me, I would soon show you how far you are wrong, but you won't, so there's an end of that. But I can be of the utmost service to you. I am going to be your chief spy. I am going to know whatever happens in this whole region of country, and I am going to inform you of it with all possible dispatch. I have been working out a system by which I can communicate with you. Under cover of my plantation duties, which, now that you have taken away all the overseers to serve as soldiers, are greatly multiplied and diversified, so that I have to go to distant blacksmiths' shops and other places where men gather and gab, I shall be able to pick up all the information you want. The point is to be able to communicate it to you without revealing your whereabouts when you desire your whereabouts to remain unknown. I have been thinking it over, Roger, for a long, long time, and I think I have perfected a plan. If you will give me an hour or so, we can work it out together.”

Just then came one of Roger's men riding at a furious pace to announce that a squad of tories was plundering a plantation ten miles

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

away. There was no time to stop for the perfection of Jacqueline's plan, but before riding away in pursuit of the enemy, Roger said to her:

"Go every night at ten o'clock to the little lake in the swamp down yonder. I will meet you there sooner or later—as soon as I can. Your idea is an excellent one. We must perfect it and put it in operation. Until I see you there, good-by, dear," and off he went at the head of his handful of men.

It was two nights later when Jacqueline rode into the little semi-circular opening down by the lake in the swamp where Roger was broiling some bacon on the end of a stick. He was quite alone, having placed his camp at some distance away as a measure of prudence, and having come hither in the hope of meeting his sister. The two sat down together by the fire, and Jacqueline outlined her plan.

"First of all," she said, "I shall never sign anything. You will understand that, and when I have time to put a message into cipher, I'll do it in this way."

Then followed an account of her simple cipher device, which she had made as free as possible from puzzling and time-wasting complexities. In a little while she had made her

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

brother as familiar as she herself was with the methods to be employed in writing and reading messages.

When she had done explaining the cipher, she resumed.

“ Sometimes I shall not have time to use cipher. You see, my dear brother, you are only my brother, not my lover. If you were my lover, I, as a well brought up young woman should have all the time necessary to make my letters to you as full and as nonsensical as possible. As you are only my brother, I will always come straight to the point, and spend as little time as possible in preparing my missives. So there now. Do not imagine that even my love for you puts you on the plane of a sweetheart.”

With that she mischievously kissed him and Roger kissed her in return. “ Now then, dear,” she said, “ I have a lot more to explain, and must not stop to make love. First of all I want a little powder. Can you spare me some for my pistols? Secondly, the next time you make a foray, I want you to capture half a dozen or a dozen guns for me. I want them in the house? ”

“ But who’s to use them, Jack? ”

“ Oh, my young negroes. I have organized

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

the most patriotic little band of pickaninnies you ever saw in your life. There are a dozen or twenty of them ranging in age from twelve to fifteen years. I taught them all how to read a while ago, and I have taught them many other things. They are devoted to me, Roger. You wouldn't think it, because I am a hard mistress you know." Roger laughed at this. "Yes I am; I am very hard. I always insist upon having everybody tell me the truth, and you know the young negroes don't like to do that, but I am very rigid, Roger, very rigid. Still they like me, and they will do what I tell them to. Best of all I have taught them to like you. I have taught them that to render you any service is to distinguish themselves and win my highest favor. Now it seems to me that in the course of your campaigning around here you are making a good many rather bad enemies, and some of these days they may conclude to take vengeance in some way at Alton House——"

"Just let them try that," said Roger. "If they ever do, I will give them cause to remember it the longest day that a single manjack of them lives. Be sure of that, dear."

"Oh, yes, I know," she answered, "but at the same time an ounce of prevention is better

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

than a pound of cure, so I want the guns. I am drilling my little squad every day with sticks. When I get real guns for them and actual ammunition, I will train them to expect an assault upon Alton House, and when it comes, they will know exactly how to repel it. I have studied out every point of vantage, from which a fellow can shoot with the least possible danger of getting shot, and I will show them just where to go when the fighting comes. I will be there to captain them, be sure of that. Don't you think it's a good plan, Roger?"

"A very excellent plan, Jack," he answered meditatively, "and as for the guns, why I know where to get them within the next twenty-four hours. I was going after them anyhow, not to get the guns—for we have enough—but to stir up the fellows that have them. I will have them brought away and delivered at Alton House. And now, dear, go on with what you had to say."

"Yes, Roger; you must not interrupt so much. I have a lot of things to tell you. I am going to establish a post office department. There are a great many hollow trees in the swamps and elsewhere, and every hollow tree is my post office—at least every one that I mark. I have got a little hatchet here, and when I

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

mark three cuts on the smooth side of a tree that has an opening on the other side, you will recognize that as one of my post offices. So all you have got to do is to look out for the three little cuts like this, do you see?" and with her hatchet she scored, much as a surveyor might do with a witness tree. "You will find this wherever you go. I will always have a post office within reach, so wherever you are, you can send one of your men or come yourself and get one of my little billets doux."

"Where did you get the idea, Jack?" asked Roger, who was disposed to conversation.

"Oh, I got it out of a book. It was the story of a lovelorn maiden who was baffled by wicked aunts and uncles and fathers and all that sort of thing, and not allowed to see her lover or to communicate with him. She set up a little post office of this kind and kept it up until she was caught at it. Now maybe I will get caught at it after a while, just as she was, but if I am the penalty won't be the same that she suffered, because they sent her to a convent. They won't send me to a convent. I wonder what they would do to me. Never mind, I won't be caught. If I am you will come for me, won't you?"

"Come for you? To the ends of the earth,

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

Jack," Roger replied with enthusiasm, "and I will bring some fellows with me that would go through fire and water and lightning and whatever else you can think of, including a volcano, to rescue my sister. But you mustn't get caught Jack. Be very careful. When you have time, put your missives always into printing letters. Nobody can recognize your writing then for it will not be a hand writing but a hand printing. And do not write except when you must. Another thing; sometimes it will be more convenient to meet me. I don't know where I shall be, but you will generally know, and I will let you know as often as I can. Let's agree upon a way of doing that."

"Oh, you stupid," she said, "do you think I have overlooked that? Why I have got it all down as fine as possible. I have worked it all out. Now let me tell you about it. When you are going along a road, and you find a twig bent down on one of the overhanging trees, look a little further along the road and see if you find two more twigs bent down on two other trees. You see anybody might accidentally bend a twig down, and that might mislead you; but if three twigs are bent down not more than three or four trees apart you will know that Jack did it. And it means look out for

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

me. Then if you are in this swamp, you are to take your knife and cut a triangle out of a big leaf. You are to stick that on one of the trees whose twigs I have bent down. That will mean to me: 'Meet me in the swamp.' And I will come here. If you are not here I will hunt for you."

So she went on with one detail after another of a complete code of signaling and communication. It is not necessary to record here her further devices for rendering communication easy between herself and her brother. It is sufficient to say that the system was wrought out with an ingenious simplicity which prompted Roger to say:

"You are a wonder, Jack. You have a positive genius for intrigue. I wonder where you got it?"

"Well, genius was perhaps born in me, but I got my ideas of intrigue pretty nearly all out of my novels. I must 'fess up, Roger. I am an awful reader of novels, and I like the bloody ones best. I like those that have dark, underground chambers and passageways, and I have been thinking whether I could not make a passageway underground—I would if it weren't so damp—between Alton House and the swamp here. However, we will have an overground

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

communication quite as good. Never mind that now, I have got to go back. No, you shall not escort me. I know what you were going to say," she added, as he rose with evident purpose to summon some of his band. "No, I can go back alone. It is not proper for me to associate with you. You are a rebel. You are an outlaw. You have a price upon your head, I suppose. At any rate there ought to be. Your head would be cheap at any price. You are a traitor to your king. It won't do at all for a respectable young woman like me to be seen in your company. I will communicate with you only in secret. Good-night, Roger."

With that she sprang upon the black mare which she usually rode at night and disappeared in the thick undergrowth.

XXVI

IN *the* HANDS *of the* ENEMY

YOUNG Barnegal had been for some weeks absent from Roger's camp. Roger had sent him early in the summer to find Governor Rutledge, who was on the borders of North Carolina, planning ceaselessly night and day for stirring up as much of resistance as possible in the state over which he was dictator. Roger desired to receive whatever of suggestion Governor Rutledge might feel inclined to give him with regard to the conduct of his own little war in the swamp country. He desired also to learn what plans others were to carry out and in what ways he could best co-operate. In the meantime, Roger had continued his forays for fifty miles or more round about his swamp headquarters, meeting Jacqueline often, receiving news from her upon which he based his activities, and carrying out even more fully than she had intended, her plan of arming Alton House.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

The young lady had been many times stopped and questioned by officers of Tarleton's legion, out on foray duty, and still more frequently had she been warned by Tories of her own neighborhood that her movements were watched, and that unless she ceased what they believed to be her activity in the patriot cause, she was likely to get herself into serious trouble. She parried all questions by frivolous answers. She assumed the lightheartedness and lightheadedness of a chattering young girl who has never had a serious thought in her mind, and to a considerable degree she managed in this way to disarm suspicion. She said to Roger once when she met him by appointment:

"You cannot imagine, Roger, what a silly little chatterbox you have for a sister. Oh, I have cultivated all the art of it. I have studied up speeches out of my novels. I have them pat and ready for use whenever anybody questions me."

Nevertheless, Mistress Jacqueline Alton was under serious suspicion, and this suspicion suddenly began to manifest itself in new and rather startling ways. For Tiger Bill, to whom hatred was the one inspiring motive of action, had by this time become a notorious loyalist. He had scattered his money right and left as freely

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

almost as his cynicisms, and both had been employed to discredit the patriot cause and to induce his neighbors of every degree—but particularly the lower degrees—to take active part in tory warfare. It was believed by those who knew him best that Tiger Bill heartily hated all mankind, but his special hatred was against his reputable and patriotic neighbors, and particularly against those of Alton House. Had not Geoffrey Alton been his enemy through life? Had not Roger Alton been the bearer of young Barnegal's challenge to him? Had he not been a witness of his humiliation and horsewhipping at the hands of his nephew? Could there be a sweeter revenge to Tiger Bill than that of persecuting these, his special enemies?

In this mood of mind, Tiger Bill had succeeded at great expense to himself in setting on foot a tory band whose duty it was to persecute those against whom he cherished the bitterest personal malice. He was shrewd enough to discover the part that Jacqueline was playing, and it seemed to him to offer an opportunity for a most satisfactory revenge. If he could get this young woman into limbo, and perhaps even get her hanged as a spy, or failing that, incarcerated in company with the lowest criminals

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

in some jail, he felt that his malice would be gratified beyond anything that he had ever known.

Jacqueline reported the situation to her brother by letter and in person as fully as she might. She desired not unduly to alarm him, but it was necessary to explain to him the extraordinary precautions that she must now take in communicating with him. Roger, with that bluff determination which was his chief characteristic, made eager inquiry as to the band organized under Tiger Bill's inspiration. "I will find it," he said, "and crush it; and failing that, I will go and hang Tiger Bill himself to the biggest tree on his plantation. He is too great a coward I suppose to take the field himself. He is the sneak that sets the others on. Perhaps the best way to discourage the activities of his tories would be to hang him and thus deprive them of his inspiration, and of the devilish ingenuity of his suggestions. I will do it, Jack."

"But you cannot, brother," she answered. "He is not to be found. He has taken pains as I have ascertained, to absent himself from his plantation, and to hide himself securely against possible vengeance."

"Still, I may be able to find him," said

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

Roger. "I will try anyhow. Barnegal returned this afternoon. I will leave him in charge of my party and go myself on a reconnaissance. While I am gone you may communicate with Barnegal by the same means that you use in sending messages to me. I have explained the system to him, and he knows it perfectly. In the event of any need, call upon him. I think you know him well enough to know how gladly he will respond, especially if the need happens to be to protect you, my sister, from danger."

So the two parted, and before morning Roger was twenty-five miles away in search of information as to Tiger Bill's whereabouts. He had one piece of information at this time which was of unusual value to him. He knew all the men in the region round about who were Tories by profession, for one reason or another, but were patriots at heart. He could go to them and secure information which no avowed patriot could give him. It was his mission now to find out from them, and especially from those of them who were members in name at least of Tiger Bill's company, where that gentleman might be hiding.

But while Roger was riding away in one direction, a squad of Tiger Bill's men was wait-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

ing for Jacqueline in another. That young woman had ridden less than half an hour after parting with her brother, before she was suddenly halted and surrounded in the middle of a road by thirty or forty as desperate fellows as were ever engaged in an evil enterprise. She was seized violently, a gag was thrust into her mouth, her arms were pinioned, and her feet tied together. She had no time even to cry out. If she had cried there would have been none to hear.

But as the party rode away with her, a lurking figure rose from the underbrush near by, darted quickly across the road and into the swamp. For five miles he ran, scarring himself in contact with cypress knees, tearing his clothes from his person and his skin from his flesh among the brambles, knocking himself prostrate a dozen times in the darkness by contact with the tree branches and overhanging vines which make those swamps so nearly impenetrable. He swam across streams and pushed through mires that a prudent man would hardly attempt in the brightest daylight. Obviously he knew the shortest way and he took it.

In half an hour Marlborough—for it was he—broke through the bushes and into Roger's

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

camp, bleeding, torn, disheveled and desperately excited. Finding that Roger was no longer there, he quickly communicated the facts to young Barnegal. Unfortunately, the band was, at that time, depleted in numbers—only six or seven men remaining, but with this meager force, Barnegal set out at once in pursuit. They soon discovered that Jacqueline's captors were riding southward meaning apparently to pass by Pocotaglio, Coosawhatchie and Grahamville and on through the swamp country to and across the Savannah River.

Barnegal gave the hottest possible pursuit, and about daylight overtook the enemy north of the Combabee River. He gave battle at once, but his efforts were futile. Every man in the company except Barnegal himself and the negro Marlborough fell from his saddle with a bullet through his body, and only the speediest possible retreat saved Barnegal and Marlborough from capture in their turn. Both of them would have stood there until death released them from their duty, had there been a chance in that way to rescue the young woman. Seeing that there was none, it was for her sake, not for their own, that they withdrew.

Fortunately Roger Alton had given Barne-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

gal as accurate information as he could of his own intended movements, and the first thing now to do was to find him if possible, and at any rate to gather together a force sufficient to resume the pursuit. The white man and the negro were equally in earnest. They rode with discretion, the negro fortunately being able to save some miles now and then by reason of his knowledge of short cuts. As they were pushing through a body of dense undergrowth a man, who had been sleeping there suddenly sprang up and recognized them.

It was Humphreys. It took them less than a minute to tell him of what had happened, and he was ready instantly with a plan.

"I know where Roger Alton is," he said. "He is not half a mile away from this place. I will give Marlborough directions how to find him. Go to him, Marlborough, and bring him here as quickly as possible." With that he furnished the negro with all necessary information, and it seemed scarcely five minutes before the young commander rode up mounted upon his spare horse, Mad Bess, and almost crazed with horror at the news that had been brought to him.

Humphreys remained cool, as he always did. "Calm your excitement, Captain Alton," he

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

said. "We will rescue your sister this side of the Savannah River. I will answer for that. Come with me." Then mounting his own horse, which had been picketed in the underbrush, he led the way out of the swamp into a public road. "We must follow this road," he said, "a little way. Captain Alton, this is a desperate case, and we must use desperate means, if you don't mind."

"Mind, man!" said Roger. "I will resort to battle, murder, or sudden death, anything, everything to rescue my sister."

"Very well," said Humphreys, "I am going to lead you into very bad company. I am going to employ in this enterprise means which ordinarily you would scorn, men for whom you cannot possibly have the smallest respect. In doing so I am going to reveal myself to you in a way which I had hoped might never be necessary. You say you don't mind what means I employ or what agents?"

"No, no, no!" answered Roger. "To rescue Jacqueline I would join forces with Satan himself, and make comrades and intimates of the most disreputable devils in hell."

"So would I" said Barnegal. "Come on."

"Be quick, man," said Roger impatiently.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“I will be quick,” said Humphreys. “Come with me.” And again they turned into the swamp. Presently they came upon a little glade where there were a dozen or twenty ponies grazing about. “We must leave our horses here,” said Humphreys, “and ride these marsh tackeys instead. We have some swamp work to do where our horses would leave us in the mire. As quickly as possible transfer your saddles to the best of the tackeys.”

The marsh-tackey played a large part in the partisan war of the Revolution. He exists only in the Carolina swamps. He is the descendant of thoroughbred horses that were turned loose or escaped wellnigh a hundred years before the Revolution, and bred wild in the swamp land, picking up a precarious subsistence from such grass and soft cane tops as they could find. The marsh-tackey is at home in the swamps. He knows his way across mires as no other horse ever did in the world. He has a trick not only of recognizing a mire where a less expert intelligence would fail to see it, but of crossing it without miring. When he comes to such a spot he suddenly changes his gait, reducing his steps to six inches or so in length and keeping no foot upon the ground for more than a fraction of a second. In that

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

way he avoids sinking, and small as he is—for the largest of the tackeys are only ponies—he can carry the heaviest weight with ease, live upon nearly nothing, and endure the longest journey apparently without fatigue.

These tackeys, running wild in the swamps are anybody's property who chooses to capture and subdue them. The work of subduing them is a difficult one, requiring all the skill and determination of the most daring horseman, but once subdued, the tackey is a servitor whose faithfulness can be relied upon in all emergencies, and whose endurance, as has been indicated, is almost incredible.

Roger quite understood what Humphreys meant when he proposed the exchange from stout horses to the lean little marsh-tackeys. Five minutes later the four men were threading their way through swamp lands which only the guidance of Humphreys, and the peculiar gifts of the little animals they rode, could have made passable or possible. Within an hour they came upon a sentry—a long, lean, grizzled and desperate looking fellow who called to them to halt. Humphreys said a word to him and he withdrew his gun from his shoulder.

“How many men are there,” Humphreys asked.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“Twenty or twenty-one in all,” answered the man.

“Very well,” said Humphreys. “That is quite enough.” Then, turning to Roger he said again: “Don’t object now to the agents I am going to employ in this business. They are desperate men, outlaws, criminals, if you please. They obey no man on earth but me. Murder to them is a pastime. They fear no God, no law, no enemy. They will follow me without question into any danger, and their fighting I think will satisfy even your ideas of what brave men may do. There is a price upon the head of every one of them, but for that matter, there is a price on your head and upon mine also. We too in the eyes of the British are criminals and outlaws. Let us not be too choise of our companionships in a case of desperate need like this.”

He gave Roger no opportunity to reply beyond a word or two ejaculated to signify his readiness to employ any means available for the present purpose.

XXVII

“TARLETON'S QUARTER”

BY this time, South Carolina had become a hornet's nest. All through the long summer after the surrender of Charles Town, the British had been quite unintentionally nursing the patriotic sentiment of the people. They had everywhere disregarded the terms of surrender which they themselves had prescribed for Charles Town. They had everywhere ruthlessly violated their part of that compact. They had wantonly seized upon citizens to whom they had pledged safety and protection under parole, had torn them away from their homes and their families, and sent them to prison in St. Augustine and elsewhere, denying them not only news of what was happening at their homes, but even the privilege of meeting together on Sundays to hold religious services. They had thrown Henry Laurens into the Tower of London without even the accusation of anything worse than desiring

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

peace and reconciliation between the tories and the patriots within the Colonies. They had not yet hanged Colonel Hayne as they did a year later, but they had in hundreds of other cases disregarded the terms made by themselves with surrendered prisoners and patriots, and had thrown men—to whom they had pledged protection and safety in their homes—into prison. Tarleton had begun that system of savage warfare the history of which has made his name peculiarly infamous in history. It was his custom to violate flags of truce, to butcher men who had surrendered and thrown down their arms, to waylay peaceful citizens, and to make the war as brutal, as inhuman, and as bloodthirsty in its savagery as any that the Red Indian ever conceived.

In brief, the British had taught the Carolinians that there was no safety for them except that which they could secure by their own strong right arms. They had taught them that pledges and promises were of no avail; that mercy was nowhere to be found; that the warfare of the patriots was held to be a lawless and criminal resistance to constituted authority; that belligerent rights were never to be accorded to them; that peace for them lay only in abject submission or in the grave.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

With brave men, conditions such as these could have but one outcome. They took their scythes and their ploughshares to the blacksmith shops to be beaten into swords and pike-heads. They arose in revolt everywhere, and made ceaseless though irregular war. Bands like that which Roger Alton had raised multiplied throughout the state. In every neighborhood there was such a force held together by the bond of a common patriotism, and a common danger, striking wherever a blow was possible, and dispersing when resistance seemed impracticable, but dispersing only to assemble again the moment that opportunity came.

Under such circumstances, it was natural that news of Jacqueline's capture should spread like wildfire through the country, and that pursuit in the hope of rescue should be extended throughout the region concerned. A dozen little bands set out from a dozen different quarters to overtake and, if possible, to overcome the force that had her in charge. Roger Alton and Barnegal knew of course that this would be done, but they were not disposed to trust anything to chance, or leave any effort unmade on their own account. The danger was that these efforts at rescue would come too late—that the girl would be carried within the

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

strongly entrenched British lines at Savannah before her rescue could be accomplished.

It required but a glance on their part to discover the nature of the camp into which Humphreys had led them. It was a camp of smugglers; men who had for years been engaged in violating the revenue laws imposed by the British.

They were a grizzly, greasy, unkempt lot of desperadoes, but they thronged about their leader with the loyalty of men who had learned to know the value of leadership, and whose respect for his authority had been strongly stimulated upon many occasions by his manifest readiness to shoot down any who might refuse instant and entire obedience. The moment Humphreys came among these his followers, his manner underwent a marked change. He was no longer the modest, shy, shrinking creature that he had so often shown himself to be in his intercourse with Roger Alton, but a chieftain who gave orders that must be obeyed instantly and without questioning.

“How many boats have you?” he asked.

“Plenty of them, sir,” replied one of the men. “How many do you want?”

“Three will do. Arm them immediately, and put six men into a boat. I will go in one,

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

Captain Alton in another, and Lieutenant Barnegal in the third. Send your other three men to me quick."

When the three men appeared and doffed their caps he said to them: "Mount the freshest tackeys you have and ride at once to Pocotaglio. Three of you can make a fight there on the causeway across the marsh as long as need be. If this gang attempts to cross there, hold them in check until we come. We'll come up from Coosawhatchie. Go quick, and do as I tell you. I hold you responsible." Then turning to Roger he said: "I do not think they will cross at Pocotaglio, but by chance they may. They will probably go higher up country and pass that way to Coosawhatchie, six miles below. There at any rate they must cross the river, and we will be there to meet them. Into the boats, men, into the boats quick!"

His orders were delivered like pistol shots, and obeyed without a question. As the men dropped into the boats, Humphreys turned to Roger and said:

"With your permission I will take my boat first. One thing you can depend upon. My men will stand until the last man of them dies. Have no fear of that. If I find the enemy al-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

ready at the river I will engage him. You and Mr. Barnegal must look out for the young lady. Cut her out as quickly as possible and take her to the rear. Then join us, for we shall be greatly more than overmatched."

There was not much of military dignity in this plan, but Roger saw instantly that it was a good one. There was danger that upon the first assault Jacqueline might be put to death or carried away by some of her captors. The party in charge of her outnumbered Humphreys's force quite two to one or more. The rescue must come early in the action, if it was to come at all.

The oars were already muffled carefully. That seemed to be their habitual condition, for Humphreys gave no order and made no inquiry with regard to it. Obviously these men were accustomed to keep their own counsel. They bent to the oars with a will, and just at night-fall reached the rude bridge at Coosawhatchie. Fortunately they were ahead of the enemy, as they learned from one of the three who had been sent to Pocotaglio, and who had galloped thence to Coosawhatchie to report what had there been learned with regard to the enemy's advance. This simplified matters considerably. It was certain now that Jacqueline's captors

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

were seeking to cross the Coosawhatchie River during the night. Humphreys decided that it was better to let them do so, than to meet them on the bridge. Sending his boats back down the river for half a mile, and hiding them there securely, he brought his little force up and stationed them according to his notion of what the need might be. He threw Roger Alton with six men across the stream to the north and placed him there in a thicket.

“When the enemy attempt to cross,” he said, “I will engage them on the south side. I will place Mr. Barnegal near the head of the bridge while with my other men I will hold a position two or three hundred yards south of the bridge. Lieutenant Barnegal will remain concealed until the enemy passes. When I engage them he will watch his opportunity and fall upon their flank. You in the meantime must rescue the young lady before she reaches the bridge. I take it for granted that she will be kept in the middle or rear of the cavalcade. At any rate, bearing in mind that her rescue is the main object to be accomplished, I leave you to see to that in the best way you can, not caring a hang how many of our lives it may cost. If you need our assistance you will find us with you promptly.”

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

Roger was astounded at the extraordinary quietude with which these men seemed able to break through brush or to move about in any way that they pleased. Scarcely the red Indian himself was more skilful than they in maintaining silence while accomplishing their purposes.

An hour passed after these dispositions were made, and still no sign came of the approaching enemy. To Roger and to Barnegal the minutes seemed hours and the hours days. But at last the roistering crew, who had secured liquor on the road, and whose enthusiasm in their evil work had been stimulated by deep potations, came riding down the road, wholly unsuspecting of the existence of any enemy in front. They had apparently little fear of assault from that quarter. Yet they acted with some caution.

The head of the column rode upon the bridge and crossed it. The centre remained awhile, apparently to let those in advance of themselves discover what might be ahead. A rear guard of ten men rode a quarter of a mile in the rear while Jacqueline, surrounded by as many more, rode upon a led horse in the middle. The squad guarding her was the one that paused before attempting to cross the bridge.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

Roger's first impulse upon seeing her was to dash at once into the party with the six men under his command and try conclusions then and there, but he had learned enough in his warlike experience to know the importance of carrying out plans as nearly as possible as they were laid, so he waited until he heard the rattle of Humphreys's rifles in front, and the response of the men he was attacking. Then he made his own dash, and fortunately, young Barnegal proved less patient and less obedient to orders than he. Instead of falling upon the flank of the men in front, as had been intended, he left them to be dealt with by Humphreys, and himself led his party across the bridge to aid Roger in the rescue.

It was the work of a very few minutes to snatch Jacqueline from the hands of her surprised and bewildered captors, to cut her bonds, and bid her ride away into the cane and there await events. That done, Roger and Barnegal dashed across the bridge but in doing so received a heavy fire from the rear. The rear guard had obviously come up.

Meantime, Humphreys was still struggling with the men in front, outnumbered but battling gallantly. Knowing that Jacqueline was safe for the moment at least, Roger and Barne-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

gal disregarded the foe in the rear, and pushed on to assail the force in front. In a minute it was crushed between them and Humphreys's force, and its men threw down their arms. Then Roger turned and led his men and Barnegal's back to the assault upon the now present rear guard. To his surprise, Humphreys, with four men—all that he had left of the six with whom he had struck the first blow—came up and joined in the melee. Even in that moment of excitement, young Alton's curiosity got the better of him.

"What have you done with your prisoners?" he asked.

"There are none," answered Humphreys. "These fellows don't take prisoners."

And to his horror, Roger discovered that such was the truth. The men who had thrown down their arms had been quickly despatched, in order that their captors might be free to continue the fight upon their comrades, and when these in turn offered surrender, one of the smuggler men called out: "We will give you Tarleton's quarter!" What that meant a road strewn with dead men quickly revealed.

"This is horrible," said Roger to Barnegal, as Jacqueline emerged at their call from the cane.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“ I do not know,” said Barnegal. “ For myself, I am savage enough to-night to rejoice in it, and besides, it is a trick that the British themselves have taught us. Those fellows did not cry ‘ No quarter,’ you remember. Their cry was ‘ Tarleton’s quarter.’ It is a cry that is going up all over this land. It is the cry of desperate men forced into savagery by savagery. It is the recoil of an explosion. It is the unbending of an overstrained bow. Let’s not be too sensitive about it. Jacqueline at least is safe.”

“ But where is Humphreys? ”

In the thick darkness nobody could see, and a shout or two brought no response. Roger, turning to that man among the smugglers who had seemed to be Humphreys’s most trusted lieutenant, asked: “ Where is your captain? ”

“ The last I saw of him, sir, was in the road behind there in the middle of the fight. I will go and look.”

He went. And a few minutes later Humphreys, shot through the body in half a dozen places, was found lying in the sand which his blood had drenched into a quagmire.

There was a little blacksmith’s shop near. Standing before it was a light wagon. Into this Roger bid the men lift their chieftain,

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

and, attaching four of the tackeys to it said: "I will take the poor fellow to Alton House. Come, men, you will go with me as a body-guard."

"It is not necessary, Cap'n," said the one whom he had recognized as lieutenant. "The cap'n seems to be done for, and anyhow, he will be well guarded in your hands. It is not our way to go into the settled country. We will go back to our camp. If you need us at any time, you can find the way there, I suppose;" and with that, the scant remainder of Humphreys's forces, leaving their dead comrades on the field, returned to their boats and were seen no more.

Roger was unwilling to leave the spot until he had ascertained that there were no wounded men of the tories—for they were tories and not British—to be cared for. But he found not one. Humphreys' men were not accustomed, apparently, to be satisfied with wounding men. Their idea of battle was to kill.

Roger's next care was to look after Humphreys's wounds. Procuring an axe from the little blacksmith's shop, he quickly blocked out of one of the great pine trees growing there, some large chips of that resinous wood which ignites

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

at the touch of fire and blazes like a blast furnace. Splitting this into bits, he brought out his tinder box and quickly had a torch that enabled him to see almost as by daylight.

He handed this to Marlborough, bidding him mount into the wagon and hold it there while he should inspect the poor fellow's hurts. Marlborough, who was usually as nimble as a cat, made several futile attempts to mount into the wagon, and finally fell prostrate into the sand. Going to him, Roger discovered that his faithful follower had received a severe hurt in the action. He had in fact been cut down by a sabre stroke which had partly scalped the side of his head, and laid open his shoulder. Uncomplainingly he had sought to conceal his own wounds and to go on with the duty that he loved in the care of his Mis' Jacqueline. But weakness from loss of blood and from shock had been at last too much for him, so that now he lay there helpless.

Lifting him into the wagon, Roger and Jacqueline, with Barnegal's assistance, did what they could toward dressing the wounds of both men. Marlborough was only faint, but Humphreys had completely lost consciousness, though so far as they could discover, the bullets that had passed through him had struck

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

no immediately vital part. This at least was their hope.

The journey to Alton House was a long one, but fortunately the roads of that country are well adapted to the easy transportation of the wounded in a wagon. There is no stone there—not even a pebble—and the sand which constitutes the roads is soft and yielding enough to render springs unnecessary even in an ambulance. Nor are there any hills to be climbed or descended. And so, slowly, and as gently as if in a barge, the two wounded men were carried to Alton House, arriving there at dusk of the next day.

When the morning dawned on the day after that journey, Jacqueline, who was still attending Humphreys, turned to Roger and said :

“ Roger, this is the man who gave me the money chest.”

Roger responding said, “ This is the man who sailed with me from the Bahamas. I have promised him never to mention the fact to a human being, but to you I feel that I may tell it now, in view of what he has done for us. But keep the secret well, my dear, for his sake. Until yesterday I did not know why he wished me to remain silent on that subject. I know

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

now, but it can do no harm for you at least to know that this is not the first time in which I have been under obligations to his courage, his daring, and his skill."

XXVIII

HUMPHREYS'S *story*

UPON their arrival at Alton House, Humphreys was put immediately to bed and a surgeon was sent for. He shook his head before he had examined half the wounds, and said:

“Poor fellow! There is no hope. He may become conscious to-night or to-morrow. I would advise that, if he does so, some one question him as to any matters he may wish to arrange before death, for that he will die of these wounds is as certain as science itself.”

Marlborough was found to be in much better case, and after dressing his wounds, the doctor predicted that, with his superb physical health and strength he would be on his feet again within a day or two and quite well within a month. “But it was a narrow escape,” he said. “If that sabre had struck one-quarter of an inch farther to the left, his head would have been split open like a watermelon.”

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

Roger watched all night by the bedside of Humphreys, while Jacqueline attended poor Marlborough, whom she had insisted upon placing in her own bed upstairs.

The next day Humphreys's consciousness returned as the physician had predicted that it would, and Roger said to him:

"I am afraid you are very badly hurt, old comrade, and I want to know, in case anything should happen, if there is anything I can do for you."

Humphreys looked at him for a moment out of his resolute gray eyes and said, in a feeble voice but without emotion or whimper:

"Of course I understand. There is no hope for me. I am done for. And do you know, I am rather glad of it. I have lived for years hoping for a chance to make atonement. My time of atonement has come. I had hoped never again to associate myself with the desperadoes who were our comrades in that fight. I had hoped to begin a new life. I want to tell you all about that, but I cannot tell it twice, and I must tell it also to your father. Would you mind sending for him, and in the meantime, please give me a drink of brandy."

The brandy was furnished and Colonel Alton summoned. He was now so feeble from

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

the effects of his wounds and his maladies that he had on this occasion to be carried down the stairs, across the hall and into the room of his wounded guest. The moment he entered and looked at Humphreys, there was recognition in the faces of both.

"I see that you know me, Colonel Alton," said Humphreys.

"My dear friend," said Colonel Alton, "I do know you, and for what you have done for me and mine I have come to thank you with all the strength and sincerity that I can command. Do not let us talk now. It will only increase your suffering, and perhaps your danger."

"I do not mind the suffering, and, as to the danger, that cannot be increased. The hour of my death has been appointed. It is very near at hand. It makes little difference whether I hasten it by an hour or two or not. There are some things I must say before I die." Then he added: "I would like to have your daughter Jacqueline present. She too ought to know the facts in this case. It will pain her to know, but it is due to her that she should know."

Accordingly, Jacqueline was summoned, for it was clear that to resist the wish of the dying

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

man would only add to his agony. When all were gathered together he said:

“Let me tell my story in my own way. It is a story greatly to my shame, and yet I cannot help thinking, as I stare death in the face, that perhaps, perhaps—well, never mind. It is for you to judge me, not for me to be judge in my own case. Much of the story you know, Colonel Alton, but not all of it. Let me tell the whole of it, and pardon me if I weary you by recounting things that you already know. My name is William Vargave.”

At this both Jacqueline and Roger started.

“Yes, I knew,” the wounded man continued, “I knew that you would be shocked at hearing this, but I cannot help it. My name is William Vargave. I was born to as honorable a house as any in the Carolinas. I was reared in all the pride and glory of our aristocracy, an aristocracy founded not so much upon birth as upon honorable achievement. My father, Colonel Alton, served with your father in the early Indian wars, before either you or I was old enough to carry a gun. When our time came, you and I served together in like manner against the Cherokees. You were cruelly wounded; I escaped unhurt; but we were comrades then, and you did not forget it.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

Throughout all my young manhood you were the friend held most closely to my heart, and you were always the most generous and helpful of friends. I was cursed with a temperament that you sought to correct. I was cursed with a disposition to overweening confidence in myself, in fortune, and in the future. I was a day-dreamer, an optimist, an enthusiast, call it what you will. I was always planning great enterprises, and always failing in them. My failures taught me nothing. You, though you tried, could teach me no more than they did.

“At last came the time when I dreamed a dream of fortune such as no man from Cræsus down had ever dreamed before. I wrought out its details in my mind, with such care that I believed in it from the bottom of my soul. I could see no chance or risk of failure in it. On the contrary, it seemed to me that failure was as utterly impossible as a failure of the sun to rise in the morning. I invested in this scheme every dollar that I could raise. I mortgaged all my possessions to the utmost limit. I sold everything I had that was susceptible of sale. I still lacked a thousand pounds of enough to make the enterprise a success. I went to you and asked to borrow that money. You bade

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

me halt. You told me that my scheme was visionary. You showed me—if I had had the sense to see—that only failure and disaster could come of it. You said to me: ‘After you have gone into this matter and failed,—when you have come out of it impoverished and in need of money, come to me, and you shall have it in whatever abundance I may be able to supply, but I cannot and will not help you into an enterprise of this kind by lending you money to be invested in it.’ That in substance is what you said to me. You were wise. But I was a fool. I was so sure, so certain, as I thought, of a success that would startle this continent, that I made up my mind to seize upon the assistance that you refused to give me—I forged your endorsement upon a note that I thought I knew I should be able to meet and take up long before maturity.

“ I see now as I saw long ago, how criminal it was, but I did not see it when the thing was done. I honestly believed that no possible harm could come to you or anybody else from my act. Had I believed that there was even the remotest chance of my failure to discharge that note before its maturity, I would have burned off my right hand in the fire rather than write your name upon the back of that note.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

I hope you believe me in this. I am a dying man, telling only the truth."

Colonel Alton was sobbing, and for a time he could not respond. Presently he said:

"I do believe you, my dear friend, and I have known from the first all that you now tell me. I have understood you as you did not understand yourself. But why bring up all these things now?"

"I must, I must, I must," said the dying man. "I cannot go to my grave until I have made full confession, as I have tried to make full atonement. When I found that my crime must be revealed, when I found that my friend must be a sufferer at my hands, or must choose between that and becoming the exposé of my guilt, I fled. But I fled not as a coward flees; I fled not to escape punishment—that I would willingly have taken upon myself and endured as an atonement. I fled only to gain opportunity in order that I might at least repair to you the harm I had done to you.

"In my youth I had been a sailor. I had always been interested in shipping ventures. I had often gone to sea to learn something of navigation, as you know. So I decided that the only place where I might earn the money that I owed you was at sea.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“ I went first to William Barnegal and laid my case before him. I thought he might help me, but he refused. In our boyhood he and I had been comrades as you and I had, and I thought that he still bore me some affection. I told him the truth and I learned then how soured and cynical he had become. He softened nothing in his dealing with me. He taunted me with the fact that I was a forger, and expressed wonder that, with the consciousness of such a crime on my mind, I should venture upon his premises. He then went so far as to say to me: ‘ If you could give me any proper security, I might lend you money at interest for the sake of the interest, but as I understand you, you are a beggar as well as a criminal;’ and with that he bowed me out.

“ I went next to my father-in-law. He was a man, as you know, of imperious temper and almost an exaggerated sense of honor if it is possible to exaggerate that sentiment. He too repulsed me, and bade me take myself out of Carolina, saying: ‘ When you married my daughter, it was without my consent. I see now the wisdom that prompted me to withhold such consent. Go anywhere out of the world that I live in. As for your wife and daughter, well, at least I will see that they do not

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

starve. I cannot promise you more than this.'

"On that night I sailed in a little sloop out of the creek down there where my father-in-law lived. A man was swept overboard in the gale. The crew had been recently shipped, and the men were not known by name to their officers. I instantly conceived the plan of taking that poor fellow's name, and leaving it to be supposed that it was William Vargave who had been cast overboard and drowned. Under my new name of Thomas Humphreys, I followed the sea year in and year out. The work was slow and toilsome, and at last I despaired of ever accomplishing my purpose by such means.

"I had in the meantime studied the commercial situation very carefully. The British trade laws were oppressive and unjust beyond endurance. They were so unjust indeed that even had I still held myself to be a gentleman, and a man of honor, I should have had no scruple whatever in violating them, as other gentlemen in Carolina and at the north had no scruple in sharing the proceeds of their violation. I saw the opportunity that our peculiar coast—interlaced as it is with inlets, sloughs, bayous, creeks, and little rivers—offered for

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

traffic of this kind in violation of the revenue laws. I found men engaged in this business who lacked the brains to conduct it skilfully, and who, for lack of brains, achieved nothing except now and then a term in jail, or, in extreme cases, a gibbet. I made myself the leader of these men. I organized them and became their chieftain. I could furnish them the brains they lacked, and the lack of which they themselves felt keenly.

“I made myself their master. Such men always need and want a master. I ruled them with a high hand. I taught them that my commands—whatever they might be—were commands to be obeyed instantly and without question upon pain of instant death at my hands. I established a rendezvous here on the coast hidden away where there was not the slightest danger of any revenue officer ever finding it, and where it would have been greatly the worse for the revenue officer who did venture to find it.

“In that traffic, which was legitimate enough in its way, I accumulated money. I dealt fairly and honestly with my men, making that division of profits which we had agreed upon, and which was just.

“It had been their habit to make little, if any,

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

discrimination between smuggling and piracy. Many of them had sailed under the black flag, and at times they went into revolt against my authority, because I resolutely refused to engage in enterprises of that sort. I held them down to smuggling. I forbade all forms of robbery, and on the whole, I think my association with them was rather for the good of the community than to its hurt. We robbed the king of England of revenues to which he had no right, but we robbed nobody else. We defied laws made to convert the people of these Colonies into tributaries of a greedy gang of London speculators, and in doing so as I lie here upon my death bed I feel that we did right. We were earlier than the rest of our countrymen in revolting against British oppression. Beyond that I do not see that we were guilty of any crime. When the British law forbade Americans to buy tea elsewhere than from British warehouses, we bought it in Spain or wherever else we could buy it cheapest, and we brought it into the Colonies and sold it openly here. When unjust British laws forbade the Colonists to export their products otherwise than through extortionate British merchants, we undertook their exportation without the extortion. We were rebels a lit-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

tle in advance of our countrymen, but not otherwise, I sincerely think, were we sinners above them.

“Nevertheless, I personally was a criminal. I was a forger. That crime still lies to my charge. Do not interrupt me please,” he said—seeing that Colonel Alton was about to protest. “I know what you would say. You would say that I have sent you back the money I unjustly took from you. That is true, but, as I said then I say now, the crime remains.

“During all these years”—here the man broke down from feebleness, and it was necessary to administer restoratives before he could go on, but no persuasion could induce him to relinquish his purpose of continuing his story as soon as he had recovered strength enough to speak. To all entreaties to postpone it he replied, “There is no future time for me. I must do now whatever I am to do. I must say now all that I have to say.” When he felt a little stronger he began again:

“During all these years I was mainly at sea, or in foreign lands, but I kept myself informed minutely of everything that concerned me in Carolina. I learned that for some reason which I have not yet fathomed, but which I took to be a cowardly fear of vengeance, Tiger

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

Bill Barnegal had never revealed what I had told him of my crime. I learned how you, Colonel Alton, heroically sacrificed yourself and took up the burden which I had laid upon you. I learned how you defied even the power of a court to impoverish and imprison you, rather than expose my crime and bring my helpless and innocent family into disgrace. How I have honored you for your heroism! How I have loved you in their behalf, though to them I am a dead man, as you know.

“When I saw Carolina threatened with the invasion that is now upon us, I could no longer resist the impulse that had been strong upon me from the first to join with my countrymen, and do battle for my native land. I came back to America in company with your son, but without his knowledge of anything concerning me. I separated myself from him almost at the moment of our landing. I begged him then to keep secret the fact of our having been associated even in that way. I did this for his sake, and in order that no revelation of my guilt, should it come—as it easily might—should involve him even indirectly in my shame.

“Through your daughter I returned to you the money of which I had robbed you, and through her peril I have at last been enabled to

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

make some small atonement, perhaps, for the wrong I did you. It is all that I can now do. My hours are numbered, and they are not many. I beg of you to write up to my credit at least the desire to serve you and yours, and I beg of you, in the name and for the sake of my innocent wife and daughter, who have mourned and still mourn me as a dead man, that the secret you have kept for so many years may be kept still."

With that the dying man ceased. Colonel Alton, sobbing between his words said:

"It shall surely be as you wish, my friend. To me there is no past this side of the days of our youth, when you and I were friends. All else is blotted utterly out of my mind and soul. We are living in new times. We are establishing new institutions. We are beginning a new life. We are putting the past behind us. In this republic there is no history back of the republic's birth. Concerning the man whose record in this struggle for liberty is good as yours is, there is no ante-dating evil to be remembered. Liberty looks forward, not backward; up and not down. God Himself accepts atonement as a blotting out of sin. Shall we poor mortals be more relentless than the Arbitrator of the universe? I am beginning to see

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

things in a new light—the new light of liberty. Your secret, my friend, shall never be made public. That part of your past which you regret has been utterly blotted out by the atonement you have made at cost of your life.”

He could speak no more. Rising with difficulty to his feet, he hobbled out of the room, leaving Jacqueline and Roger to close the eyes of the friend of his youth, who sank almost instantly into his last sleep.

XXIX

IN *which* ALTON HOUSE *receives* VISITORS

AFTER Colonel Alton had recovered himself from his passionate emotion, he sent for his son to consult with him.

“I have promised our dead friend,” he said, “that for the sake of his wife and daughter his secret shall still be kept inviolate, and yet I cannot bear to think of burying him here without their knowledge, leaving his grave forever nameless. It seems to me that the wiser course, and the one he himself would have us pursue, is to send for his wife and daughter and tell the wife at least the full truth. We may tell her as little as possible with regard to her loved one’s sin, as much as possible with regard to his heroic atonement. As for the daughter, I shall leave that to Mrs. Vargave herself. She may do as she pleases. The girl is a thorough-paced gentlewoman, proud, strong, and able to bear such griefs as life may

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

bring to her. Perhaps it may be best to tell her all, but from the rest of the world we will conceal all. I want you, if you will, to take some of your men as outriders, and go at once to Lonsdale to bring Mrs. Vargave and her daughter hither. We will then quietly lay our friend to rest. It is better that they should be here now, at any rate."

"Yes," said Roger, "in the present disturbed state of the community, two women left alone on a remote and isolated plantation without any white man, not even an overseer to call upon for aid, are in a dangerous position. I will go for them father, and, with your permission, will myself tell Helen the whole truth. She has given me her love, and it seems to me she is entitled to hear from my lips, rather than from another's—even from yours—the sad story that must be told. I now clearly understand how it is you so peremptorily forbade my marriage with Helen, and I understand how hard it was upon you that you could not explain to me the reasons for your course. But that is all past now. Vargave has made atonement with his life, sacrificed in the rescue of Jacqueline from a fate too horrible even to contemplate. You have accepted the atonement in full, and so have I. You have granted him absolu-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

tion for his sin against you, and the world knows nothing of his crime. There is now no obstacle, so far as I can see, to the execution of my purpose of marrying Helen."

"Wait a minute, my son," broke in Colonel Alton, "you forget. Tiger Bill Barnegal still lives and hates, and still knows the facts in this case. He has been baffled in the revenge he sought by the seizure of Jacqueline—for I am persuaded that this crowning outrage was devised by him and committed under his direction. When, my son, I refused my consent to your marriage with Helen, I told you that my objection was in no remotest way to her. You understand now what I meant by that. I was proud then, and saw things in the light of our old traditions. I can now so far lay them aside as to think of my dead friend as my friend still, and to forget that he ever sinned. But we now have a new duty to do, a duty to which he with his dying breath has invoked us. My duty, as I saw it before, was to protect the Alton name, to forbid a marriage which would have made my grandchildren the grandchildren also of a forger. To-day the forgery is a thing dead, done for, buried and forgotten. So far as we are concerned it does not exist. But Helen has still to be protected. We have

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

promised him to shield her name, and we must do so at cost of all sacrifice, even though it be the sacrifice of your happiness and hers, my son. While Tiger Bill lives, you must not marry Helen. Should you do so, he would instantly see and seize his opportunity for vengeance. He would publish to the whole world the facts that the dead man in there has asked us to keep sacredly secret for the protection of his wife and daughter."

"You are right, father," said Roger. "I see our duty clearly enough, and I see it as you see it. Let it be so. I will go at once to Lonsdale, but first I must make a few arrangements."

Leaving his father, Roger went first in search of Jacqueline. To her he hurriedly gave some instructions regarding her own safety.

"We have not seen the last of this affair," he said, "but the terrible punishment which my cutthroat allies gave to your captors down there in the swamp at Coosawhatchie will teach them to wait a while before resuming hostilities. In the end, however, it will also anger them and prompt them to still more desperate attempts hereafter. You must be protected. I am going to Lonsdale. I shall ask Charlie Barnegal to look up the survivors of my troop

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

and recruit it so far as he can in my absence. But the more I think of it, the more necessary it seems to me that you should have protection here at home always within reach.

“I like your idea of forming a pickaninny brigade. You already have a supply of arms. I will ask Charlie to look a little to the instruction of your little black soldiers, and to supply you abundantly with ammunition.

“Organize and drill the little negroes as thoroughly as you can, and let them learn from the beginning these two things: first, that guns are given to them to fight with, not to throw down when the enemy comes. And, second, that the way to fight successfully is instantly to obey every order given to them by their commander. You are their commander. Good-by, dear, I must talk now with Charlie, and I must be away.”

“But are you going alone to Lonsdale? Are you going to bring Helen and Mrs. Vargave here without protection on the road in the present disturbed condition of the country?”

“No, no,” he answered, “I shall pick up three or four trusty fellows whom I know on the way, and we will make a sufficient guard. If necessary, I know where our desperadoes are.”

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

Then, seeking out Barnegal, Roger gave him such instructions as he needed, and said to him at parting: "I look to you, old fellow, to have our force as strong when I return as it was before those gallant fellows were killed under your command, and in the present condition of the country I think you will find it easy enough to make it so. The whole countryside has been aroused and alarmed into activity by this escapade. Every young man in the community who has not sworn allegiance to King George, feels that his own home and everybody's home is now in hourly danger. Every one of them, I take it, is ready to fight under the first leader that may summon him. Send out for them, muster them in the swamp, and have them ready against my return. Then you and I will see what we can do toward re-establishing order in this community. Good-by." And with that he swung himself into the saddle on the back of his trusty Bullet, and giving rein to the animal he was gone.

He reached Lonsdale just after daylight the next morning. He had ridden the whole eighty miles in fifteen hours, and he patted Bullet on the neck in praise of his superb devotion and endurance; for all of that energy which Bullet had formerly been disposed to expend in

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

resisting this master of his, was given now to the splendid doing of that master's will. But as Roger, followed by the four armed companions whom he had summoned to his side as an escort, entered the avenue leading up to Lonsdale, he was horrified to see instead of the house, a shapeless and smoking ruin. With an exclamation of horror he said to his men :

“ The devils have made war upon these two defenceless women. God only knows what they may have done.”

With that he and his comrades plunged spurs into their horses, instinctively felt of their rifle flints, and with pistols drawn rode at a full run up to what had been the beautiful home.

There was nobody there, not even an enemy, and it required some little search through the woodlands round about before they could discover any one even of the house-serving negroes. The one first found was the young black man who had waited upon Roger during his stay at Lonsdale the year before. How eagerly he welcomed the coming of white men whom he knew he could trust, his trembling and eager manner made quickly manifest. With a few hurried questions, Roger learned from him what had happened.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

“ You see, sah,” the negro said, “ when the damned tories—pardon me, massa, I didn’t mean to swear——”

“ Oh, swear all you like at them. Go on; what about them? ”

“ When de tories comed here—you see I seed ’em comin’ an’ I rushed into de house and almost dragged the Missus and Misse Helen to one of de quahtahs. Den I slipped back over dere in de woods and den I saw a big light, and I knows dey done set fire to de house. Dey didn’t get de Missus or Miss Helen. I has got ’em hid away in de woods where I don’t think even a tory could find ’em. But dey got most of de black people, and they done took dem off in a ship. I don’t tink more dan one or two of ’em is left besides me, and I suppose de one or two, if dere is any, is hid away somewhere out in de woods, and maybe dey will come back again some day, I don’t know. That’s all dere is to tell, Massa.”

In the meantime, Roger’s men had been beating the bushes in every direction, hoping there to find some one at least of the marauders. They found none, but they saw that the looting of the plantation had been complete. Everything that was portable and of value in the house seemed to have been carried away be-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

fore the building was set on fire. Here and there a bit of silver or other valuable had been dropped by the robbers in their flight, thus marking their trail, and telling the story of their evil deeds. There was nothing to be done but to go with the young negro to the hiding place in which he had bestowed his two mistresses. The poor women had been frightened, of course, but, with the spirit of the high-bred race to which they belonged, they had recovered their equanimity, and now indulged neither in hysterics nor in tears—not even in bewailing. They welcomed Roger and declared themselves ready to go with him at once to Alton House.

“You see,” said Helen, with still a touch of playfulness in her manner, “we shan’t detain you as we women generally do while we decorate ourselves and pack useless baggage, for we have no decorations left, and no baggage either, and nothing to pack into it if we had. But how are we to go? Those fellows carried off every horse on the plantation, and as they burned the barns the carriages of course are gone too.”

“You can ride, I think, Helen,” said Roger. “You haven’t forgotten the lessons that your grandfather taught you. Bullet here has never

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

been trained to pillion service, but you and I together, I am sure, can ride him double. I shall put you on my crupper, and for your mother we will make an arrangement among my men."

Mrs. Vargave declared her own ability to ride a-pillion also if a quiet horse could be found in the cavalcade. One of the men instantly responded, pledging his horse to good behavior if Mrs. Vargave would honor him by accepting a seat on the crupper. The horses were jaded, of course, all but Bullet, but they did their work well, and by stopping over night at a roadside tavern, Roger managed to make the long journey before the end of the next day.

He was glad of the necessity of that overnight stop at the tavern. It gave him an opportunity to inform Helen of the sad events that had brought about this journey. He felt that no other could tell her the story of her father's shame and her father's death with so much of tenderness as he could bring to bear, and from no other lips could she receive it with so little pain as from his.

She bore it very bravely indeed, but she rejected Roger's suggestion that she should be the bearer of this news to her mother. "That

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

belongs not to me nor to you, Roger, but to Colonel Alton."

So it was arranged. Mrs. Vargave, still in ignorance of what had occurred, rode on to Alton House with the feeling of an animal that had been hunted but is nearing a refuge.

Very naturally, Roger avoided all direct reference to their own affairs in his talks with Helen as they jaunted along seated upon the same horse, yet she was left in no doubt of the tenderness of his love, or of his passionate devotion to her, nor could she in her turn, avoid letting him see how entirely he was master of her mind, her soul, her life. She tried hard indeed to avoid such a revelation, for now that it was made additionally certain that no engagement could exist between her and Roger, all the pride of her bringing up prompted her to reticence. Nevertheless, when these two reached Alton House, there was a closer bond of sympathy between them than ever before, and a clearer understanding on the part of each that the tie between them was perfect for all time, whatever their external relations might be.

On the arrival at Alton House there was much of agitation, of course. Mrs. Vargave must learn the terrible story which Roger had

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

already told to Helen. Then there must be the quiet funeral, and then the waiting.

Roger scarcely paused for supper before mounting Mad Bess, which he had ordered to be brought to the door, and pushing off into the swamp to find his followers. He felt that he had work to do and no time for delaying. He had explained to Helen that he would not attend the funeral, and she understood that this determination was prompted by a delicate consideration for her mother.

“You are right, Roger,” she said. “It will be easier for mother if only a very few are present to see my poor erring father laid in his grave.”

“Don’t say that, Helen,” said Roger. “Don’t think of your father as a poor erring man. All that, as I told you, is past. You are to think now, henceforth and forever of your father as a hero, as one who in life denied himself every joy, risked every danger and endured every hardship to atone for an error committed without evil intent,—one who met death at last as only a few heroic souls of this world can meet it. You wrong your father; you wrong me; you wrong those children whom it is my hope that you will some day bear to me, when you hold your father otherwise than in honor.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

It is a hero that you are about to bury, a nobleman, a gentleman. Teach yourself that lesson, dear, before I come, as I shall come when the time is ripe, to claim you for my wife."

And with that he threw himself upon his splendid mare and was gone.

XXX

MARLBOROUGH *brings* NEWS

AS he had expected, Roger found his band greatly increased in numbers. Thanks to the awakened sense of all-embracing danger in the community, he found nearly forty men ready to answer his call. Not all of them were assembled in the swamp of course. It was part of his tactics indeed to keep but a small body there, and to distribute the rest about among their several homes where they could do the work at once of pickets and scouting men. It was theirs to find out what was going on, and to report it promptly to their commander. It was theirs to answer his summons, whenever their services were needed in more active ways, which was now a thing of very frequent occurrence.

In thus summoning them, Roger had adopted and applied a good many of Jacqueline's devices for silent communication. A litter of leaves at a crossroads, the dead branch of a

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

tree thrown in apparent carelessness by the roadside; a little dust heap piled as with childish hands; a diminutive bonfire built upon a knoll—these and a hundred other signals had each its definite meaning for Roger Alton's men. And so perfect became the system of quick communication, that within less than an hour at any time he could bring every man of his band to his side. He had no one place of rendezvous even in the swamp, but he had means of indicating on each occasion of need the point at which his men were expected to join him for a foray.

Barnegal had already, as he put it, "equipped" Jacqueline's little army and established her arsenal in one of the wine cellars of Alton House. He went thither frequently on the plea that it was necessary for some one to look after the progress of her young soldiers in their organization and drill, but somehow it usually happened that when he reached Alton House he found the soldierly operations in so good a state of advancement, that he had nothing further to do than sit awhile in converse with Jacqueline. Nevertheless, he refused to relinquish his theory that his presence as a drill-master was occasionally necessary.

It was a very busy time for the next few

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

weeks. The tories were reinforced presently by a small body of British regulars, who had been sent into that part of the country for the purpose of keeping the loyalists in heart and aiding them in their marauding enterprises. The patriots had become almost ceaselessly active in their endeavors to overawe the tory bands. There were skirmish fights almost daily. Now and then a miniature pitched battle occurred.

The operations of Roger's band were no longer confined by any means to the narrow limits of the neighborhood. They made raids sometimes a hundred miles away, and oftener than not they were half that distance up or down the country. They operated sometimes in a single body, sometimes in detachments, according to the need. The one idea that inspired all their activity was to make Carolina too hot to hold the British and their tory allies. Meantime General Marion was in the midst of his splendid career in the upper country, and Sumter was ceaselessly busy, wherever he could find a foe to fight. The British had already learned that their conquest of South Carolina, so far from making an end of war there, marked only its beginning.

There came news one day that a body of

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

British regulars supported by nearly a thousand armed tories, was making more than ordinary trouble at a point near the mountains. A message from Sumter invoked the aid of Roger's band, and that young gentleman, marshalling all his force, hurried to the scene of conflict.

For several days the fighting was almost continuous, but each day, so far from diminishing, increased the numbers of the patriots in the field. There were men by hundreds throughout the country who were accustomed to take up arms when fighting was on and to lay them down the moment the fighting was done. There was fighting enough now to call these men to their duty, and to keep them at it pretty continuously.

One night, after a day of hard riding and hard fighting, Roger encamped his force—now numbering somewhat more than fifty men—in a little strip of woodland, and threw out his pickets to guard the camp while his men slept upon their arms. He was at supper when there came to him a visitor. He was a man lean and muscular in appearance, wearing a semi-clerical garb composed of long stockings, high boots, knee breeches, and a tow linen coat that reached half way down his legs, but was cleric-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

ally cut in the collar. He was a strange figure—one that the modern caricaturist would rejoice in, but there was a deep earnestness in his face, and his soft blue eyes had a steely glint in them that meant battle when battle was necessary.

He introduced himself to Roger, saying: “I am the pastor of a Presbyterian Church up there in the hills. My parishioners are a God-fearing people, and they are always ready to do God’s service when their pastor points out to them what it is. Last Sunday we met for service, when the news came to me of this disturbance down here. I am an Irishman, as you probably guess, and while I hope the divine grace is always present with me, I still have a touch of the old Adam in my soul, and I fear that I was glad, when the devil, on whom it is my business to wage war, came forward in the form of these British and tories. It gives me a chance, you see, to know where my blows fall and when they tell. I did not preach last Sunday. There wasn’t much time for it. I adjourned the meeting to the grove outside the church, and told my people what God expected of them. They are simple people, Captain Alton, but if they are plain Irishmen by descent, they are enthusiastic Americans now. I told

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

the women that they must work a little harder on the farms because I was going to take all the men away to fight, and the women waved their bonnets and hurrahed. Women don't say much in my congregation. We hold to the Pauline doctrine that women should be silent in church, but I knew what their bonnets meant, and so I turned to the men. 'There,' I said to them, 'You see what kind of patriots these your womenkind are. So now go you home as quick as you can, and meet me down at the foot of the hill there, all of you armed, every man bringing a little bit of bacon or whatever you have got in your house to live on. Bring it along. Let's have some cornmeal too. And bring your guns, bring a lot of powder, all you have got, do you mind?' It wasn't a very formal sermon, or a very eloquent one, and it had no gospel text, but it did its work. And I am camping over here by you, Captain, with one hundred and twenty men, and every man knows how to shoot straight and every man knows how to stand up in God's service. I tell them every day it is God's service they are doing."

By this time, in his excitement, the old man had resumed the brogue of his boyhood out of

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

which he had so strenuously labored to drill his tongue.*

It was in this sort of spirit that the war in Carolina was fought, and the men who fought it were of almost inconceivably different types. There were young planters of aristocratic lineage like Roger Alton, and Charles Barnegal. There were born soldiers like Marion. There were the Scotch-Irish farmers of the mountains—believing primarily in the doctrine of predestination that held all events to be unalterably determined “before ever the foundations of the world were laid,”—men who did their duty with the inspiring sense that every act of theirs was decreed by God himself. There were young roisterers who were inspired almost as much by the love of adventure and of the wild woodland life of partisan service as by sentiments of patriotism, though they held these too, very strongly. And there were desperadoes—outlaws if you like—like those whom Vargave had summoned to Jacqueline’s rescue. It was a motley crowd, but heroic in all its parts.

On the morning after Roger’s meeting with the queerly clad old preacher whom he nick-

* This is a historic fact.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

named Joshua, in memory of that great commander whose authority extended even to the sun in Gibeon and the moon over the vale of Ajalon, the enemy was found to be dispersing. The patriot force was much too strong for it to meet in battle. The tories for the most part disbanded and took to the woods. The British regulars retreated as rapidly as they could, battling as they went, with one patriot band after another assaulting them.

It was just then that startling news came to young Alton. It was brought by no less trustworthy a messenger than Marlborough, whose shoulder was still encased in bandages, and whose head was bound until it looked like that of a grand Turk in his turban.

“I couldn’t wait to get well, Mas’ Roger,” he said, “because somebody had to find you quick, and I knew Marlborough could do it quicker’n anybody else. Old Tiger Bill has got his people togeder again, and dey have burnt two barns on your plantation. We are expecting them at Alton House every hour, so I thought I would come and just tell you so that you might go back there. Miss Jacqueline she told me to say that if you had duty to do up here she would try and hold the fort until you

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

got through, but to come as quick as you could."

It was not a minute later before Roger had his band in motion, and they rode furiously. But the distance to Alton House was great, and time had been lost of course during Marlborough's search for him.

When Roger told Barnegal of the news brought to him by Marlborough, that young man was quick to see the explanation. "The old Tiger," he said, "like the coward that he is, has seized his opportunity. He knows that we are away, and he means if possible to reach and loot Alton House plantations. Let us hurry, Roger. Remember that Jacqueline and Helen Vargave are in danger. What matter if we ride half our horses to death and kill half our men. We must get there in time to save them."

In that spirit, and spurred by that impulse, the two young warriors rode like the driving of Jehu, and the faithful fellows in their ranks followed them without murmur or complaint.

XXXI

CAPTAIN JACK'S DEFENCE

YOUNG Barnegal had judged rightly. Coward that he was, old Tiger Bill deemed it safe now in the absence of all the patriot bands from the lower country, to indulge in the luxury of a perfect vengeance. He believed it to be certain that no patriot with a gun in his hand remained in the region round about. He regarded Alton House as helplessly defenceless, and so, when he mustered his men for its destruction, he for once placed himself at their head, and took personal charge of the enterprise.

He established the headquarters of his party at the wheelwright's shop, and began at once to spread terror throughout the neighborhood. First of all, the outer barns of Alton House plantation were burned by night; this apparently for the sake of torturing the inmates of the mansion with apprehension. Against this method of procedure "Captain Jack" took no

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

measures whatever. It was obviously useless to do so, and it would serve only to disclose the fact which she wished to conceal, namely, that she had an armed force at her command.

Colonel Alton was at this time hardly able to sit in his chair, and his irritation at enforced inaction was not good for the gout that tortured him.

The negro wheelwright, who brought to Alton House the first news of the band's approach, was fleeing to the swamps for safety. Nearly all the other negroes on the plantation—those of them at least who worked in the fields—were doing the same. Their terror of being captured and deported to the West Indies was limitless. They had somehow learned of what happened to negroes who were thus deported to tropical islands. They had somehow found out that slavery was quite a different thing there, a much more horrible servitude than any that existed in the American states; that it was untempered by any touch of patriarchal relations; that in those countries the hireling overseer with his cruel whip stood always between the slave and his master, and that the one thought was to grind out of every man or woman or child the utmost dollar of earning with the minimum of food and shelter

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

and with no clothing at all. It was a slavery inspired solely by greed of gain, unsoftened by sentiment, unrelieved by any sense of pity. It was into such bondage as this that the British sent every Carolina negro upon whom they could lay their clutches. And from this peril the negroes everywhere were accustomed to flee into the recesses of the swamps, whenever they saw signs of its coming.

At Alton House, only the house servants remained. The little company of pickaninnies, dressed in white uniforms with flaming red and yellow trimmings, all of which Jacqueline and Helen had provided to make them proud of themselves and their service, rallied round their young mistress. They had a certain expertness in the use of firearms, as every one had at a time and in a country where the chase was a daily occupation, and the use of gunpowder was almost an instinct.

Upon hearing of the impending danger, Captain Jack's first thought was to provision the fortress—for she intended to make a fortress of Alton House and to stand a siege there, certain that if she could hold out long enough strong arms would come to her aid and her rescue. She had all the available pigs and chickens driven into the cellars and near-by



The Defenders of the Fortress.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

out-houses, where they could be drawn upon in case of need, as a food supply. This had been originally Marlborough's suggestion. At his instance also—for he had seen something of war by this time, and had learned some of its arts—she had her little negroes dig shallow rifle pits in the grounds around the house, throwing the earth to the front as a sort of parapet. She had so located these pits that it was possible to pass from one to another with very little exposure, and in that way to retreat to the house whenever retreat should become necessary. Shots from these pits, coming apparently out of the earth would be naturally more demoralizing to the approaching foe, especially in the night, than shots emanating from the source whence they might be expected.

In all her preparations for defence, Helen Vargave was Jacqueline's efficient lieutenant. Full of suggestiveness, alert, and with a courage that nothing could daunt, Helen was enthusiastic for the fray. "We are soldiers' sweethearts," she said to Jacqueline one day, "and that comes pretty nearly being soldiers, doesn't it? And besides, I am a crack shot. My grandfather taught me that among the other unladylike accomplishments that he in-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

stilled into me to the horror of my governess."

It was at Helen's suggestion that an out-house built of thick planks and heavy timbers was pulled down, and its materials erected into a kind of parapet at the edge of the great piazza. This defence was bullet-proof, and lying behind it, the little black soldiers could do a maximum of damage with a minimum of danger to themselves.

Most of the serving women in the household were helpless from the first, but a few of them remained calm enough to help. Two of these constituted themselves picket guards. They were strong young girls, clad in scant skirts and accustomed to run like deer. Taking turns they patrolled around the house and through the grounds throughout the nights of waiting. Each was armed, and each was instructed to fire an alarm when the enemy approached, if there were no other way of giving notice to the garrison, but to run home in silence instead, if there should be time for that.

The defenders of the fortress had not to wait long for the assault. It came about midnight when the moon had gone down, and a deadly chill was in the air. Believing that the place was defenceless, or at most, that Colonel Alton

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

might be able to fire only a single shot or so. Tiger Bill pushed his men straight towards the house by way of the main entrance, screening himself behind them that he might not by any chance receive the one stray shot anticipated.

The Tories were ill drilled, or rather, not drilled at all, and they came on slouchily, in a loose line, numbering perhaps eighteen or twenty men in all. As they approached the dark and apparently sleeping house, they saw a negro girl rise from the bushes near and scurry away, as they thought, to shelter. A moment later, "Crack-crack-crack-crack-crack!" came from the rifle pits, less than twenty yards in front of them, and two of the men fell riddled with bullets. The rest hastily ran, and as they did so, trampled upon their leader, Tiger Bill, who had received one of the leaden messengers in his body.

"Good for you, boys," cried Jacqueline, in low tones as she ran from one rifle pit to another. "Are any of you hurt?"

"No missie," said little Dick, the smallest and youngest of her juvenile soldiers. "Those fellows didn't hurt nobody because they didn't git time to fire."

The boys wanted to sally out and pursue the enemy, as they knew white soldiers often did

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

when the enemy retreated under fire, but Jacqueline was too prudent for that.

“They will come back,” she said, “and they will fire next time. They are angry now.”

With that, she took two or three of the boys with her and going to the point where the torries had received the fire, made a search for wounded men. She found two dead ones whom it was not worth while to waste time upon. She found another evidently wounded, crawling on hands and knees. Presenting her gun at his head, she bade him halt, and called for help from the house. Some strong young arms seized upon the wounded man in the darkness, and carried him bodily into the hallway. It was too dark to see him, for every light had been extinguished, and Jacqueline had no notion of relighting any of the torches while the danger should remain. So she directed those of the housemaids whose terror permitted them to be of no other service, to carry the man above stairs into a rear room, and there to light candles.

“We must look a little to his wounds,” she said, “if they give us a minute for that.” In the meantime she returned to the piazza where she found Colonel Alton. He had had himself wheeled out in his armchair, and now sat with

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

his ammunition pockets slung from his shoulders as if for the hunt, and his shot gun at full cock, lying across his knees. His gouty feet in the meantime were snugly resting on a pillow on top of the little board parapet before mentioned.

“What are you doing here, father? Why are you not in your room? It will kill you to be exposed in this night air.”

“Do you suppose, daughter, that an old soldier like me concerns himself much about night air, and little things like that? I am a bit helpless to get about without assistance, but I can sit here and shoot the next time those fellows come, and I have come here to do it. You go on with your work, dear. But if I were you, I would withdraw half your boys from the rifle pits, leaving only one or two in each. It is not well to expose your entire line in front, with no reserve to fall back upon.”

The girl acted at once upon the advice of the old commander, who, in losing the use of his legs, had not lost his skill in the art of war. This new disposition had hardly been made, when the tories appeared again, firing this time into the darkness and wildly. Under Colonel Alton's direction, the defenders in the piazza reserved their fire, the boys in the rifle

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

pits delivering theirs as rapidly as they might, and then, under directions previously given them, slipping back to the house. The tories were apparently deceived as to the location of the defence. They emptied their guns at the points where the rifle pits were situated, because from those points alone had come any resistance. The rifles of that day were flint-locked, muzzle loaded affairs unprovided with cartridges, and loaded only by the measuring out and pouring in of powder, and then by a rather difficult pushing home of a leaden ball surrounded by a bit of greasy cloth called a "patching." A gun once emptied was innocent of harm until it could be reloaded, a matter requiring from half a minute to two minutes, according to the coolness or excitement of the man handling the weapon.

At Helen's suggestion, Jacqueline had had enough pikes made—long spears of wood, shod at the end with sharp-pointed steel—to arm all her force in case of the failure of ammunition.

With the instinct of the old soldier strong in him, Colonel Alton seized upon the moment when the tories had emptied their guns, and himself took command although he could not rise. With quick, sharp orders to Jack he di-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

rected operations. The boys fired their guns at short range into the already confused ranks of the tories, and then seizing their pikes sallied forth at a run, and dashed headlong upon the enemy.

It was the work of but a moment, but it was effective. Half a minute later not an unwounded tory remained in the Alton House grounds. The boys returned, promptly reloaded their guns, and stood ready for another assault. But no other came during that night, nor did Colonel Alton think another would be made for the present. He knew enough of the moods that govern undisciplined men in fighting, to know that two such repulses as had been given to this band would work a demoralization from which it would take time and effort for them to recover. He suggested to Jacqueline, therefore, that she go at once to the wounded man's bedside, and ascertain if anything could be done for him.

To her horror she discovered that the man was none other than Tiger Bill himself! His wounds were apparently not very serious, but his habits of life were against him. Soaked with brandy as he had been for years his nervous system could endure but little of shock, and by the time that Jacqueline reached his

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

bedside he was raving like a madman, in an attack of delirium tremens. It required two or three pairs of strong arms to restrain him, but these fortunately were furnished by negro women unfit to serve as a part of the defensive force.

When the facts were reported to Colonel Alton, he said to Jack: "They will not come again to-night, my dear, and I doubt if they come again at all. They have lost their leader, and that, to a crowd of this kind, usually means dispersion."

His conjecture was right so far as a renewal of assault that night was concerned. Jack's little negroes had proved themselves good fighting men, but to save their lives they could not conquer their racial disposition to fall into profound slumber the moment they grew still. They were good soldiers but bad sentinels, so Captain Jack bade them sleep on their arms where they were, and she and Helen alone guarded the camp throughout the night.

The next day, scouts were sent out to learn what the enemy might be doing, and if possible to bring a surgeon to the house to attend upon Tiger Bill. The surgeon came and brought with him the information desired.

He was a little old man oddly dressed in a

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

fashion even then antiquated. In his disposition, an uncontrollable irascibility and an instinctive gentleness were always at war with each other for the mastery. He punctuated all his sentences with "damns" and interlarded them with gently caressing phrases. His attitude toward each human being was either one of intense antagonism and disgusted contempt, or one of exceeding tenderness and affection. And just now the mingled manifestation of his loathing for old Tiger Bill and his caressing affection for Jacqueline and Helen was still further complicated by his surgeon's instinct of mercy to a patient. His words would scarcely bear repetition here, but as he worked over the old man's wounds a continual tide of pattering vituperation flowed from his lips, interrupted now and then by exclamations of pity.

"You deserve all you got, you damned old—Ah, poor fellow, that hurt you, didn't it? I couldn't help it. After all I am glad I did it, you old scoundrel—There, dear," (turning to Jacqueline) "don't stand so close to the bed. It pains you I know—I had to open that artery, but I guess after all I must tie it up, or the poor fellow will be dead in a few minutes, and serve him right too, confound him—Do, dear young lady, leave the room and leave this old

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

villain to me. I will take care of him.—No, no, I don't mean I will do him any harm—not as a surgeon at least.”—And so he rattled on and on and on.

When he was through, he turned to Jacqueline and said: “He will get well of his wounds easy enough, if his jimjams do not return. Of course I must take care of that. Have you any opium in the house, my dear?”

Overstrained as she was, suffering from want of sleep, full of apprehension, and instinctively sympathizing with the old man in his sufferings, Jacqueline nevertheless could not restrain her laughter at the comical chatter of the pudgy little old doctor. But in the end her indignation conquered her other emotions, as soon, at least, as the surgeon had reported old Tiger Bill out of danger.

“I am glad of that of course,” she said, to Helen, “but I don't think I ought to be. Think of it, Helen, that old beast coming here like a coward at the head of armed ruffians to make war upon a helpless invalid like my father, and a lot of women like us! Thank God, we have been able to beat him at that game anyhow!” Then turning to her maid, she said: “Stay here, Molly, and if we are want-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

ed, any of us, call us. We must go and get some sleep."

But first of all she inspected the defences of the house. She saw to it that each of her young soldiers received his proper meed of praise, reinforced by a hearty breakfast and a replenished bullet-pouch. Then throwing herself upon a joggling board—for she would not leave the piazza until the danger should be utterly past—she fell into a profound slumber as other military commanders have done in intervals between their periods of strenuous, soldierly work.

With the coming of night, the watchfulness was resumed again. The boys were returned about nine o'clock to their rifle pits, and each of them was furnished with a great bowl of strong, steaming coffee, in order that they might remain awake during their tour of duty. They had slept practically all day, and had they been of a race other than their own, sleep would now have been impossible to them even without the caffeine stimulant. But Jacqueline knew their tendency to somnolence when inactive, too well to trust them under such circumstances. From time to time she went through the rifle pits chatting a little in order to arouse

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

her soldiers, and replenishing their coffee bowls. In this way she kept them on the alert, resorting now and then to the little trick of pretending to hear the enemy coming by way of additionally stimulating wakefulness.

This time the night passed nearly away without an alarm. It was almost daylight, when from the fig orchard lying upon the easterly side of the house, the tories suddenly appeared and made a furious dash to gain the piazza. Had they accomplished this, their success in overcoming resistance would have been almost certain. Only half the little force was stationed behind the wooden parapet. The rest, as we know, were in the rifle pits in front. But Jacqueline had foreseen a situation of this kind, and had carefully instructed her little negroes in anticipation of it. She blew a little whistle twice. That, by preconcerted agreement, informed the young soldiers that the enemy was coming from the east, and it ordered them also to retire by way of the west from the rifle pits to the porch. They came as a timely reinforcement just after their comrades behind the defences had emptied their guns; and their second volley, coming unexpectedly to their enemies after they had supposed all the defen-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

sive rifles emptied, drove the tories back into the fig orchard.

By this time the day was dawning, and Jacqueline could see that the force in the orchard was much greater than that which she had succeeded in repelling on the night before. She had little hope now of making her resistance long successful. For the men in the bushes spread themselves out in open order and seized upon every point from which they could fight behind shelter. Hencoops, kitchen chimneys, large trees, negro quarters, and even the curb of the well became breastworks for the enemy. From these they poured an irregular but most annoying fire into the piazza, which of course was open and exposed except for its low, plank defence. Jack's little negroes stood their ground most manfully.

"Poor fellows," she said to herself, "their courage will cost them dear, but it is better that they should die here fighting, than fall into the hands of those men."

So she kept them at work loading as rapidly as they could, and under her direction reserving their fire until heads were exposed from behind the barriers occupied by the enemy.

"Do not waste your bullets," she presently

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

enjoined the boys. "Do not shoot until you see something to hit."

Nevertheless, the enemy was steadily gaining an advantage. A squad of them would now and then quit the shelter from behind which they had been fighting, and hurriedly gain another nearer at hand. In this way they were slowly but surely encompassing the mansion to its fall.

A fierce fusilade was now coming from behind a log building used as a kitchen, and standing only thirty or forty feet distant from the house. Between it and the house was a smaller building where stores were kept. Should the enemy gain this, further resistance would be impossible, and Helen, seeing the situation, said to Jack:

"I am going to burn them out of that kitchen." With that she seized and lighted two of the great pine torches in the dining room, and crouching low to the ground, ran quickly to the little storehouse. She waited within it for her opportunity, and, passing through, she ran to the kitchen building, climbed up the logs that formed its walls, and thrusting the torches through the window of the little upper sleeping-room, plunged them into the straw of the cook's mattress. Dropping instantly to the

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

ground she retreated to the house under a shower of bullets, but happily received no harm. In half a minute the kitchen was wrapped in flames, and the men who had been hidden behind it, scampered hastily to the shelter of the big trees behind.

XXXII

FIRE *and* SWORD

THE one problem set Roger Alton to solve was to outride Time itself in his dash homeward. As was his custom, he kept silent for a time as the cavalcade thundered forward, and tried to think out all the conditions that might cause delay, and all the devices that might help haste. At the top of a hill he halted his men to breathe their horses, and during the brief wait he gave them some hurried orders.

The news of what was happening at Alton House had quickly spread among them from those of them who had been present when Marlborough delivered his message. They knew what their mission was, and they were eager to perform it well; for besides being soldiers, earnest in their work, and Americans full of implacable hatred to the tories—and especially to Tiger Bill—they were devoted to

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

their young leader with a loyalty that knew no bounds. Roger said to them :

“ Men, we are going to ride night and day. We have enough in our food-bags to keep us from starving, but we are likely to ride our horses to death. Let every man of you change his horse for a fresher one whenever he has an opportunity. Leave the old one in exchange, and tell the owner of the new one that if he is not satisfied with the trade, Roger Alton will pay full price in gold for every horse taken. Tell them to come to me when this dash is over, and I will satisfy their utmost demands. But take the horses anyhow.”

“ And say also,” said young Barnegal, “ that Charles Barnegal goes Roger Alton’s security for every dollar. I pledge every acre of land that I own, and every shilling I have on earth in this behalf. But keep yourselves well mounted, and keep together as well as you can.” With that they dashed forward again.

Night and day they rode without ceasing, scarcely pausing even to give their horses breath, and when one of them dropped out of the ranks to get water, or to exchange his horse for a better one, he was not long in rejoining the band.

Fortunately, no enemy was encountered on

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

the way to delay them, and fortunately too they had Marlborough for their guide. The young negro had been a ceaseless night hunter since his early boyhood. He had followed raccoons and opossums through all the woods within twenty miles of Alton House, and on the blackest night that ever came could thread his way successfully through every swamp and woodland.

Roger called him to his side as they reached the region over which he knew that Marlborough's sporting proclivities had made him master. He said to him: "Marlborough, we want the shortest cuts. Never mind the roads when you know a quicker way. The thing is to get there."

"I can save ten miles at least," answered Marlborough, "and between you and me, Mas' Roger, my head aches so bad that I am in a hurry to get to Alton House."

With that effort to disguise his emotion by pretended levity, the black young giant burst into tears and wept like a woman. For explanation, when he had conquered his emotion, he said: "Mas' Roger, you must excuse me, but I cannot help thinking what mought be happenin' at Alton House. Can't we ride faster, Mas' Roger?"

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

Three o'clock on New Year's morning found the band at the edge of a swamp ten miles from Alton House, as the crow flies, fifteen at least by way of the nearest traveled road. Here Marlborough said to his master: "Will you blow de horses a bit, while I goes into de bushes? I think mebbe I can find something."

Sure of the negro's loyalty and confident of his sagacity, Roger bade him go on the proposed search. He dismounted and was gone for perhaps ten minutes, until his master became impatient of the delay and was about to move forward when he reappeared.

"I'se found it, sah, I thought it was here. I can lead you now through de swamp. Dere's a little ole hut down there that I built once for some hunters. From there on for the next five miles I can follow de bank of de creek, though de water is a good deal out just now, and you may have to ride up to your stirrups now and then, or mebbe swim a little. It will save five miles at least, and when we gets out o' de swamp, we'll have hard open pine land for de rest o' de way."

"Are you sure that you can find the way. We don't want to get lost in the swamp."

"Suah, sah. I've tramped it many a time when I had to wade up to my armpits. You

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

won't get lost if you foller me, and you won't lose no time, nuther."

With that he mounted and led the way, the men riding behind in single file, for after all it was scarcely more than a squirrel path, broken through dense cane and among the overhanging vines, that Marlborough was now threading. With a precision that seemed almost miraculous, the negro picked his way in the intense darkness through a morass that few white men would have been able to pass even in the brightest day. Half an hour of struggle with vines and cane, half an hour of floundering in mires and pushing through water of varying depths, brought the party at last to the farther limit of the swamp and into the pine land. There they renewed the gallop, and pushing forward in a course as straight as the flight of a bee, came in a little while longer into the open fields of the Alton House plantation. Here Roger was at home and needed no further guidance.

Just as the day was breaking he heard the sound of guns. His men heard it too, and like madmen they dashed forward pell-mell waiting for no leadership, every man pushing his horse to his utmost in his effort to gain the front and save time. Now and then a horse

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

fell exhausted. His rider would throw himself, arms and all, upon the crupper of a companion's steed. Still it was on, on, on, they went, no man thinking of himself or of anything in the world except the rescue of the helpless women assailed by cowards at Alton House.

As they approached nearer, a sudden burst of flame greeted their eyes.

"They have fired the house," said Barnegal.

"Yes, and God knows," said Roger, "what has happened first. I know that Jack has made the stoutest resistance she could, but they have beaten her and got possession."

The words were muttered between his teeth with a note of intended vengeance in every syllable. The men too were excited, and angry beyond their customary resource of swearing. They gritted their teeth and rode silently, every man thinking of the vengeance he meant to wreak as soon as his over-taxed animal could bear him to the scene of action.

Without pausing to form in any regular order, Roger led his men through the garden beds, over the glass of the cold frames, through a fence which Bullet crushed with his chest as he came upon it unawares, into the midst of the tories in the fig orchard.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

He saw in an instant that the enemy had not in fact gained possession of the house, that Jacqueline was still holding out, and in order that she might know that rescue was at hand, and in order also that her young riflemen might not pour a volley into his own band, he blew a blast which he knew she would recognize, upon the silver-mounted huntsman's horn that he always carried slung over his shoulder, and used in lieu of a bugle.

At that instant his men fell upon the tories with a savagery and determination not less destructive in its purpose than that of the war painted wild Indian. Such of the tories as did not fall at the first onset, threw down their arms, and threw up their hands begging for quarter.

Roger and young Barnegal called to their men that the enemy had surrendered, but Burton the bullet-headed, turned to the men nearest him with the laconic remark:

“Surrender be damned!”

The men understood him, and they shared his impulse. In the fury of their excitement and anger they were determined to leave no man of all that tory band alive. Right and left they dealt their sabre-strokes, and it was only by placing himself between them and the

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

little squad which was all that remained of the enemy, that Roger at last succeeded in stopping the slaughter, and rescuing five of the men alive as prisoners.

For weeks and months afterwards Burton and the men who had been around him in the melee used to wonder over their camp fires "why on airth Cap'n Alton dun it. Why on airth didn't he let us finish the job while we wuz at it? Whoever hearn of giving quarter to rattlesnakes, or takin' mad dogs prisoners?"

"Waal," answered one of the men, "of course I agree with you. I ain't got no use at all fer lettin' a man live when he's a coward and fights wimmin. But you know, the Cap'n's more differenter. He's eddicated, an' somehow eddication makes a fellow soft-like in his insides."

"Who says Cap'n Alton's soft-like?" spoke up one of the men in obvious resentment.

"Oh, I didn't mean," responded the other, "I didn't mean just what you think. He's got grit, Cap'n Alton has. He's got sand in his gizzard if ever a man had in this world—I don't mean that—but when he's got the other fellow down, he won't kick him, even if he knows him to be a coward."

"Somehow, I can't help liking that in him,"

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

said another one of the party, "though of course we can't rise to it, as the lawyers say in court. We can't quite understand it, but I guess arter all, it's right. Them fellers had give up, and you bet 'fore Cap'n Alton let 'em go, they wusn't in any condition to fight again."

"What did he do with 'em?" asked another.

"He turned 'em over to some of Sumter's men, and they took 'em off up country. I reckon they's prisoners somewheres now. Anyhow, they ain't in the business of fightin' women no more, and I guess there won't be much more of that sort of fightin' down in our part of the country."

But this is getting ahead of our story.

The moment Roger had secured his prisoners against harm, he directed Burton with a squad of men to scour the grounds about the house and the fields for a mile away.

"See that there's nobody left with a gun," he said to his follower.

Burton, biting off a large mouthful of tobacco responded with the quite unmilitary but entirely characteristic remark: "You bet."

Then Roger and Barnegal hurried to the house and met Jacqueline and Helen at the entrance. Both were agitated after the terrible

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

experience they had been through, but both were radiant with the sense of victory. Hurried greetings were followed by equally hurried inquiries on the part of the two young men as to the amount of damage done.

Two of the brave little black fellows who had so stubbornly defended the mansion were lying on improvised cots, and the little old doctor who had remained at the house after his first summons, attended their wounds. None had been killed, but the physician would not answer yet for the results in the case of these two. "Fortunately," he said, "they will have good nursing, anyhow," and with that the old man went off talking more to himself than to anybody else, and talking mainly in terms of profanity concerning the dastardly outrage that had been committed.

"Damn it, Captain Alton," he said, suddenly, "I am afraid I have saved the life of the old miscreant that brought it all about. I have done my best for old Tiger Bill, and damn him, I believe he is going to get well."

At this moment a negro woman rushed into the front room where this conversation was being held, and announced that Alton House was on fire. The flames which had served so well in repelling the attack of the tories had been

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

caught by the wind and carried to the mansion itself.

Roger's first care was to rescue the inmates of the house, particularly the wounded. The two stricken pickaninny soldiers were carried by their comrades to a negro cabin, but it was a much more difficult task to rescue Tiger Bill. He had grown stout in his later years for one thing, and at the first excitement of the fire he had become hysterical. Yet after some difficulty he was sufficiently controlled to be carried to a place of safety. The little old doctor expressed the devout hope that perhaps some of his wounds had been opened in the process, and then went to bind them up in the event that that should prove to be so.

All possible aid was summoned, including all of Roger's men—to extinguish the fire, but a very few minutes' work showed clearly that there was no hope of accomplishing that; attention was given instead to the saving of such valuables as could be easily and quickly removed.

Before the traditional breakfast hour of Alton House had come, there was nothing left of Alton House but the splendid thickness of its massive walls. Jacqueline, who had borne up bravely in danger gave way, completely as

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

she saw the destruction wrought upon her home.

When all was done that could be done, and Colonel Alton had been comfortably installed in his wheel-chair in an outhouse Roger called his band to arms, and set out upon the work that he now appointed to himself.

“I mean to clear this whole region of tories,” he said. “The fighting is growing vigorous in the North and the British are drawing away all of their regulars that have hitherto been scattered about the country to encourage and lead these tory raids. The tories, left to themselves, will not accomplish much, I fancy. At any rate, we will leave none of them here with a gun in possession or within reach.”

Leaving young Barnegal to comfort Jacqueline and to superintend such arrangements as must now be made for the comfort of the household, Roger took his departure without waiting even for such breakfast as could be prepared.

Just before he went the old doctor came to him, his eyes positively sparkling with delight.

“It has done for him, Captain Alton; I am sure it has done for him, damn him. I have got his wounds all right, but this last fright—he’s an awful coward isn’t he?—has brought back his jimjams, and upon my word I don’t

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

believe I shall be able to conquer them. At any rate, if I do, I will give you notice somehow so you can hold him prisoner."

Roger knew the necessity of holding the old man prisoner. He knew how certainly the men under his own command would have taken him out and hanged him to the nearest tree if they had been permitted to get at him. So he was glad enough to draw off his force, and occupy them in other and more legitimate ways.

XXXIII

THE PAPERS *in the* CASE

THE doctor's prognosis proved correct. Old Barnegal, in spite of all that could be done for him, remained a raving maniac for two days longer, and then died in a spasm, the severity of which awakened the pity even of the doctor himself.

For young Barnegal this event of course created a totally new situation. He sent a messenger to inform Roger of his plans, so that he might be summoned to his commander's side in the event of need, and then went at once to the lawyer who had long had charge of his uncle's affairs. He found him a man scrupulously exact in everything, from the tying of his queue or the polishing of his finger nails, to the indexing and classifying and digestion of documents.

After Barnegal had told him of Tiger Bill's death—a bit of news which the old gentleman received without the slightest sign of emotion

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

of any kind,—the lawyer said to the young man:

“You of course are the only heir. There are no other relatives to divide the estate with you, and certainly none to dispute your right to the succession. I see no reason why you should not go to The Live Oaks and take possession at once. As for the legal formalities, if you desire me, Mr. Barnegal, to continue in my capacity as counsel to the estate, I will arrange them with very little trouble to you. I shall ask you now and then for your signature—that is all.”

“But,” said young Barnegal, “What if there is a will? My uncle never intended to die, leaving his estate to me, I know.”

“I presume not,” answered the lawyer. “In fact, I have gathered that much from time to time from his—well, let us call it his conversation if you will—but still I tell you there is no will. The fact is, that your uncle was a person much under the domination of superstition. He had an impression—which I find common enough among men of his temperament and—well let me say his habits—that the making of a will is apt to prove the precursor of an early death. He often talked with me on the subject and often declared his purpose presently to attend to that business. But I assure you, he

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

never did so. I have all his papers in charge here in my office." And opening a case marked "William Barnegal," he showed within an orderly array of documents, each carefully folded and endorsed, and all of them neatly tied with red tape into bundles, each bundle reposing in a carefully labeled pigeon-hole of its own.

"By the way," said the man of law, taking out one of these parcels, "Here are some documents which it may be of interest to you to examine at your earliest leisure. They belong of right to you. They belonged to you of right while your uncle lived, though I could never persuade him to let me give them to you. He always intended instead to destroy them in order that they might never fall into your hands. Fortunately, I have been able to prevent that. He has believed for many months past that he had destroyed them. He was confident in his own mind that he had burned them in the dining-room fire at the Live Oaks, where he did in fact burn copies of them which I had carefully made, and which, when he demanded the documents at my hands for the purpose of destroying them, I substituted for the originals. You know the old gentleman's—well, let us say, um—unfortunate habits in

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

life. On the day in question, I went to him on a summons demanding that I bring these documents to him. Foreseeing his purpose, and realizing how unjust to you it would be to permit their destruction, I bound up copies in a bundle precisely similar to this, labeled it as this is labeled, and going to him, earnestly entreated him not to destroy the papers. He grew angry with me—for indeed on that day he was rather more under—um, let us say the influence of stimulants—than usual. As I argued, and pleaded, withholding the papers, or seeming to withhold them, he grew hotter and at last he snatched the parcel from my hand, glanced at the superscription, and tossed the whole into the fire. Naturally, I did not tell him of the mistake he had made, or of the substitution which I had felt it my duty to practice. I, um—let us say—simulated regret at the catastrophe, and after a while I left him. Thus you see the original documents which I know concern you in very vitally important ways, have remained in my possession, and I have now the pleasure of delivering them into your hands. No, don't open them now, please," seeing that Barnegal in his eagerness was about to cut the red tape ligatures, "don't open them now, please, but when you are quite calm. These

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

documents are partly in English and partly in Spanish; but mainly they are in French, a language which I believe you read with reasonable ease." Barnegal signified that he did. "Supposing that your knowledge of Spanish was—"

"I know nothing whatever of Spanish," said Barnegal.

"Ah, so I feared," said the man of law, "and, as I was about to say, anticipating that difficulty, I have been at pains to make careful translations of the Spanish documents into English, placing them each with its original in order that you might have no trouble in going through the whole in consecutive order. Let me urge upon you to read them only in that way. It would produce confusion even in a legally trained mind to examine them otherwise than in their proper order. You will go at once to The Live Oaks, I presume?"

Barnegal signified his intention of doing so.

"Very well. You will perhaps have need to consult me now and then in order to learn matters of business detail which it would be important for you, as the new master of the estate, to know. Pray call upon me whenever you wish. Your uncle's papers at home—if he left any—will afford you probably little if any assistance in elucidating his affairs. He was a

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

careless person in such matters, as I have had frequent occasion to observe, and in view of that fact I have for some years past—in fact ever since—well, let us say, um, ever since—well, ever since his—unfortunate appetites if I may so characterize them—got the better of his discretion, I have made it a practice to possess myself of every written document belonging to him which might at any time be needed in the settlement of his affairs. No, no, you mistake me, if you suppose I have done this surreptitiously. I have in each case notified him that I had taken the paper, and would hold it subject to his examination at any time. I did so conscientiously in the discharge of my duties as his solicitor. It was with respect to those documents that you have in your pocket and which he wished to destroy—it was with respect to them alone that I was,—that I ever practised, well, let us say—reserve in dealing with him, and I felt myself justified in doing so, as I have tried to explain to you, by my consciousness that the documents in question belonged to you rather than to him, and that in any case he had no right to destroy them. In the absence of such a right, it was my duty to prevent him from doing an act which, if not quite criminal, would have bordered so nearly

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

upon crime as to be—well, let us say at the least—regrettable.”

And so, with a laborious precision which amused while it annoyed the impatient young man, the lawyer laid before him every fact and consideration which he deemed it necessary then to communicate, stating each with as minute care, and as much exactitude of phrase as if he had been writing documents to be presently submitted to the scrutiny of a chancery court.

When young Barnegal entered the mansion of The Live Oaks, whose late master lay still unburied at Alton House, he found among the servants there no indication of sorrow at their master's death. On the contrary, those who had been his immediate servitors—the household people—quickly gathered in the hall to welcome their new master with faces that indicated only joy in the change.

When the young man had spoken a few words to them, and sent them away about their several businesses, he wandered for a little while through the empty rooms, keenly feeling their desolate loneliness, and after a time finding himself moved to some small degree at least of pity for the man who had so long lived there with no companionship but that of his

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

own evil temper, no associates but his own unhappy moods.

“What a life it must have been!” he exclaimed to himself. “For years this uncle of mine has dwelt here with no family, no wife, no children, no relatives, and even no visitors. I doubt if any white man has crossed his threshold in friendship for a dozen years at least. What a life, what a life, what a life! Tragedy would be light reading in comparison with the story of it.”

But it was now quite dark, and the young man, finding no bell anywhere rapped upon the table for one of the servants to come to him, unconsciously using the signal to which the dead man had so long accustomed those about him. The negro boy was startled at first by the thought that it was his late master's ghost that had summoned him. He entered with face and lips of that peculiar hue which in black men takes the place of pallor. Young Barnegal ordered lights, and the servant announced that supper was served in the dining-room. The youth had fasted since early morning, and had made a long journey on horseback, but until now he had not thought of food, so that he was surprised when he recognized his own famished condition.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

Hastily despatching his supper, he bade the servants clear away the table furniture, bring abundant lights and leave him alone. "If I want you I will call you," he said. Then he sat himself down and opened the bundle which he knew held his fate.

Taking up the first paper, he found it to be in the lawyer's handwriting. It read as follows in its introduction :

"There are nine papers in this parcel. They are the property of Charles Barnegal, the younger, the son and successor of the late Charles Barnegal, and in the event of my death they should be placed in his hands without examination. These papers relate solely to the question of the legitimacy of the said Charles Barnegal, the younger. They are papers written long before that gentleman was born and cherished for a time by the relatives of his mother in France. Later they came into possession of William Barnegal, his uncle, who claimed them on the occasion of a death in France, and took possession of them in his capacity as guardian for his nephew, the said Charles Barnegal, the younger."

Then followed a precise schedule of the papers in the bundle and a synopsis of each of them in its turn, which Barnegal ran through

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

with constantly increasing excitement. Before he had finished his perusal of this first document, his eyes were aflame and his tongue parched. He looked up from his work in search of water, and found instead a tray carefully set out with a decanter of brandy and accompanying glasses. The sight recalled him to himself, and with an amused smile he muttered "Obviously the habits of the late owner of The Live Oaks were well understood by his servitors, and they do not know how completely they have died with him." With that he rapped upon the table, bade the boy remove the liquor and bring fresh water in its stead. The young negro in astonishment glanced at the decanter, and saw that its contents were still untouched. After he had served his master with the water demanded, the boy hastened to the kitchen to relate this wonderful news to the other servants gathered there.

Barnegal proceeded to read the papers mentioned in the schedule. The first was a letter from Emile Garnier to Charles Barnegal. "From my maternal grandfather," the young man said to himself, "to my father." It was in French and read as follows:

"My notary informs me of certain matters which it will be necessary for you to explain to me before I

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

can proceed further with our negotiations for your marriage with my daughter. Information has been given me from no less authoritative a source than your brother, Mr. William Barnegal, to the effect that two years and four months ago you were married in Madrid to a woman whose name Mr. William Barnegal does not know; that she was a woman far beneath you in social status, ignorant, and perhaps depraved; that after a brief infatuation you quitted her or she quitted you, and you came to France. There is no intimation from your brother that this woman is dead. If not, she must still be your wife, and you are not free to marry any other woman. Permit me, sir, to hope that there is some error in this information, for I am loath to believe that you would be capable of asking for the hand of a pure and highly-bred young woman, knowing yourself to be already a married man."

There, with the usual formalities of signature and address, the letter ended.

The next document was the reply to this letter. In it young Barnegal's father, then himself a young man, had written briefly, saying:

"In answer to your inquiries, I beg to say that if you will give me sufficient time, I will secure from Madrid and lay before you quite satisfactory evidence of the essential falsity of the information given to you concerning me. I will show you that at the time of my supposed marriage to a Spanish woman who called herself Maria Ruiz, she was a person incapable of contracting marriage, being in fact the wife already of a Spanish merchant who had discarded her for her dissoluteness. I may say by way of explanation that at the time I met her she was posing as the maiden daughter of a widow,

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

and seemed rather well placed socially, though deeply in need of money. An accident threw her into my way, and both she and the woman who professed to be her mother made the most of it. Their appeals to my sympathies and to a certain sense of chivalry were too much for the not over strong head of a young man foot loose in the world and possessed of ample fortune. I married the young woman, as I supposed, only to learn very shortly into what a trap I had been drawn. I found both women to be adventuresses of the worst possible kind. I learned also of the fact that the woman was already a wife. Proof of these facts I will lay before you in such shape as to satisfy you I am sure, and surely such facts should be sufficient to acquit me of the charge brought against me. But these are not all. I will show you further by indisputable official evidence, that the woman herself is dead. Otherwise,—void as our marriage was from the beginning,—I should not now be a suitor for the hand of a woman whom I esteem as I do your daughter.”

Then followed a mass of legal documents written in Spanish, and attested by many Spanish notarial seals. They told in effect the story that Barnegal had promised to establish, and they added to it the bit of information that the woman in the case was very certainly dead, for the reason that she had been garotted for crime under the decree of a court.

Added to these were some letters from Emile Garnier, warm, enthusiastic, loyal letters addressed to the young man whom he had permitted scandal to wrong in his mind, and there

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

was one little letter, written under permission evidently, and guarded in its phrases, as a French maiden's letters to her affianced husband must always be, signed in the little feminine hand with which Charles had become familiar as the handwriting of his mother many, many years before.

Rising from the perusal of these documents, the young man paced the floor until he came in front of the portrait of his late uncle. It had been painted before dissipation and evil tempers had wrought their full havoc upon the visage depicted in it, but the likeness was strong yet, and the picture seemed to stare at him there in the midnight with sinister eyes.

"What a devil you were!" the youth exclaimed, as he looked back into the eyes that seemed to menace him from the canvas. "What a traitor you were! What an inconceivable liar and slanderer you were!"

Midnight as it was, and weary as the young man ought to have been, but was not, he hastily rapped upon the table, and the serving man, who had been asleep in the corridor, as hastily responded.

"Have my horse saddled and brought to the door immediately," was his command.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

Fifteen minutes later young Barnegal was pushing his horse at an almost cruel pace on the way to Alton House.

XXXIV

THE END *of a* COMPLEXITY

YOUNG BARNEGAL arrived at Alton House just as Jacqueline and her guests, the Vargaves, were sitting down to breakfast in the negro cabin which had served as their dining-room since the burning of the mansion. He had ridden so hard and so recklessly of mud, that his clothing was even more dishevelled than it had been at the end of the long march of rescue. His face was haggard with excitement and loss of sleep, and the first impression his appearance produced upon Jacqueline was one of alarm.

"Something has happened," she said to him—"something terrible. Tell me, Charlie, tell me quickly what it is."

"Yes, dear, something has happened," he replied, "but not something terrible—something glad, and glorious and good instead."

Then he hastily told her the substance of what he had discovered, and the character of

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

the revelation made to him by the bundle of papers. His first impulse was to ask an audience at once of Colonel Alton, whose sufferings did not permit him to join the family at table, but for the first time in her life Jacqueline fainted. The courage that had carried her through trials which few women or few men either could have borne so well, gave way in the presence of the great good news.

When she was sufficiently recovered to be left in the care of Mrs. Vargave and Helen, young Barnegal reflected that the mission on which he was about to go to Colonel Alton was one closely touching Jacqueline. "And for such a mission," he said, "a man should be at his most presentable best."

Laughingly he said to Jacqueline, who was now under self-control, "Impatient as I am, I should wait to dress myself in silk attire for such a purpose, if I had any silk attire lying about anywhere. As it is, I can only submit myself to the hands and brushes of one of your servants, and let him make me as presentable as may be under the circumstances."

A servant was summoned; the young man's clothes were brushed; his riding boots were cleaned of the soil. After that, the youth secured razors and proceeded to shave himself,

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

and put his hair in order. In the meantime, he had so far recovered his self-possession, that he felt equal to the task of "behaving like a grown man and a soldier," as he put it, during his interview with the old gentleman.

Going to him at last upon his invitation, Barnegal drew the papers from the pocket into which he had thrust them in a degree of disorder which would have distressed the old solicitor deeply. He laid them upon the table in front of the older gentleman.

"Colonel Alton," he said, "I lay before you complete, official, documentary proof of the honor of my father and mother."

Then he hastily recounted the nature and substance of the documents and added:

"I come to you now a man as well born as yourself—one entitled to ask any man in all this land for the hand of his daughter. I come to you too as the head of my own house, for since the death of the man who so malignantly schemed against my father first, and, for revenge, against his memory and my mother's afterward, I have not a relative to represent the Barnegal name. If I were an Irishman, I should be entitled to call myself 'The Barnegal.'"

The old gentleman, with great difficulty and

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

greater dignity, rose to his feet and grasped the younger man's hand. A few broken words of affection were all that he could utter. Unable to go on he closed the interview saying :

“ Go now, my boy, and go with my blessing. Tell Jacqueline all that has happened. When you have done that,” he added, recovering himself, “ I have a mission for you.”

The young man asked eagerly what it was, as eagerly promising to fulfill it on the instant.

“ No,” said the elder, “ not until you have seen Jacqueline and told her all. Here, take these documents with you. I will keep this schedule. It is quite all that I require. It is due to Jacqueline that, after yourself, she should be the first to read those papers. Take them to her, and you and she read them together. After that, go and find my son. Bid him, if it be possible, come to me. If his duties forbid that now, say to him for me that the last obstacle which stood in the way of his love and the ordering of his life as he had planned it, is gone. You perhaps have not realized it, Charles, but your uncle's death—of which Roger is not yet informed—removes a danger that hung over Helen's head until now. Say to Roger that I am ready now, whenever he wishes, to go to

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

Mrs. Vargave with the request he once asked me to prefer to that lady."

Barnegal went to Jacqueline, as he had been bidden, and told her all. Together they read all the papers, line by line. When they had done, Jack, always mindful of others, said:—

"You must go now, Charles, on the mission my father gave you. You must find Roger and hasten his hour of rejoicing."

Singularly enough, the reading of those old, time yellowed documents by Barnegal and his sweetheart, had consumed the greater part of the day, though it had taken Barnegal by himself only an hour or two, during the preceding night, to go carefully through every one of them.

Barnegal had slept no wink now for thirty-six hours, but no desire for sleep troubled him. He was young, strong and a seasoned night-rider; but better still he was under the irresistible stimulus of a great joy. So without a thought of weariness he swung himself upon a fresh horse, furnished by little Jack especially for this gladsome occasion, and set off at almost breakneck speed to follow and find Roger.

The task of finding that young cavalier was not a difficult one, though he was more than twenty miles away. For, maddened by the

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

dastardly assault upon Alton House and by the destruction wrought there, Captain Alton was making his presence terribly manifest, wherever he went, and he went everywhere where a tory was likely to be found.

When told of the good news, he placed Barnegal in command of his force, which was now rapidly increasing in strength, and himself hastened home.

“I will join you again to-morrow or the next day at latest, Charlie. Meantime continue the work with all possible vigor. You understand what it is. We must clear this whole region of tories and make a final end of their pestilent activity. Good-by! I’ll be with you to-morrow or next day!”

XXXV

IN *which* MARLBOROUGH *attains* MILITARY
COMMAND

THE task that Roger Alton had set himself was one requiring time and ceaseless activity. Now that Tiger Bill was dead the tories in that region were discouraged by the loss of his financial support and the stronger support of his matchless malignity, but they had gained, on the other hand, the courage of rats in a corner. Every man of them was now known in his true character. Every man of them expected that the success of the patriots would mean more or less of outlawry for himself and his family, and so they were impelled by fear of consequences—which might come by means of a rope dangling from a tree—to fight desperately.

It was a fierce and bloody struggle, therefore, that Captain Alton's band had to wage, but little by little they achieved success. They broke up one tory band after another, and as they now manifested a determined purpose not

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

to be content with the dissolution of the organized bands, but to drive every individual tory utterly out of that part of the state, their foes steadily decreased in numbers. Some of them fled to the protection of the British at Charles Town or Savannah. The bolder ones among them made their way to the scene of regular military operations in the northwestern part of the state and in North Carolina, where they enlisted regularly in the British militia regiments which Cornwallis had organized as an auxiliary army.

The spring of 1781 was well advanced by the time that Roger Alton and young Barnegal began to recognize their work in the lower country as practically accomplished, and by that time a new dawn seemed at hand for South Carolina. The partisans under Marion and Sumter, and, in smaller bands like that which Roger Alton had used so effectively, had completely baffled the expectations of the British. They had maintained an irregular but very fierce and effective warfare, after all possibility of war seemed to the British tacticians to be past. They had made it harder to hold South Carolina than it had been to overrun it. They had taught their foes new and undreamed-of lessons in the art of war. They had saved

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

South Carolina, and the time had now come to reap the harvest they had sown.

General Nathaniel Greene had all this time been conducting a campaign against Cornwallis, almost matchless in history, in the brilliancy of its strategy and the tireless courage and endurance with which it had been carried out by a half-starved, ill-armed army of undisciplined patriots.

With an inferior force, this great general, chosen by Washington himself for the tremendous task, had fought and manœuvred Cornwallis out of South Carolina, across North Carolina and into Virginia, where Washington and LaFayette a few months later made him bite the dust in humiliating surrender; and when Greene saw him well on his way to his doom, he himself ceased pursuit and turning about, re-entered South Carolina to try conclusions with the British forces there.

The story of his reconquest of the state reads like romance in the pages of history. This is not the place in which to recount it even in outline.

It was to aid in this splendid campaign that a messenger from Governor Rutledge now summoned Roger Alton and his band to the upper part of the state. Before leaving, Roger placed

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

Marlborough in charge of the immediate defence of the Alton House plantations. There was not much danger of tory activity in that quarter now, but there was still enough to suggest precaution. Roger therefore instructed his faithful serving man, who had by this time shown himself to be also a brave and capable soldier, to organize and arm all the able bodied negroes on the estate as a home guard, and explained to him that even without a white officer in command, such a force would be fully authorized in law as well as in morals, to do soldierly work in the way of home defence. His last charge to Marlborough was this:

“ I am leaving all that I hold dear on earth in your care, Marlborough. I expect you to keep them in safety.”

“ If you don't find 'em safe when you come back, Mas' Roger, you won't find any but a dead Marlborough to blame for the failure!”

With that the loyal black man held out his hand and Roger grasped it warmly, saying:

“ I know that, Marlborough. I know your courage and your devotion. I trust you as I would trust myself.”

XXXVI

WHICH BRINGS *the WAR and the STORY to an*
END

VERY naturally Roger wanted to make Helen his wife before going away upon this new and arduous campaign, as Barnegal had done with Jacqueline.

“I want to feel,” Roger said, “that my highest purpose in life is achieved, whatever may be my fate with regard to the rest. I want you to be my wife if anything should happen to me. If you should be called upon to mourn me, I want you to have the right to mourn me as a husband dead on the field of honor, and not as a lover merely, whom the artificialities of our society would forbid you to mourn openly.”

“What have we to do with artificialities, Roger?” asked the girl with tear dimmed eyes. “As I told you long ago, I count myself, in my very soul, your wife, and should you fall as the hero falls, be sure I shall assert all my right as your wife to mourn my hero husband. It is the other things that I do not wish to com-

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

plicate by the formalities of a marriage now—the property things you know. Should any shilling's worth of your possessions come to me as your widow, I should feel that the love I bear you had been paid for with a price, and I could not endure that. No, no, Roger! Let us wait till independence is achieved for our country. Let us wait till you have fulfilled the last obligation to that Liberty that was your mistress before you thought of loving me.”

Then, in that lighter vein which she was cultivating for the sake of sending her lover forth to battle with only cheerful memories, she added:

“ Besides you haven't yet fulfilled the condition I imposed upon you when we first agreed, down there at Lonsdale, to call each other just ‘ Roger ’ and ‘ Helen. ’ You remember, I told you you were going into the army and would come to be a ‘ major ’ or something else as dignified as that. You are only a captain now. When you come back to me as a major I will marry you. ”

There was no use in arguing the matter, as Roger saw clearly, and as his company was already assembled, for the march which was to begin within the hour, he had no further time for parleying.

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

But while he was making his final dispositions Helen went on a little mission of her own. From the storeroom she took an apronful of sugar lumps, and, without attracting anybody's attention, fled with them to the stables. There she fed them one by one to Bullet and Mad Bess, saying to them as she did so:—

“Carry your master well. Bring him back to me in safety and I solemnly promise to feed you all the sugar lumps that are good for you, every day as long as you live.”

And in the years that came afterwards she kept her promise. Mad Bess, poor brute, was killed under her master in the operations near Ninety-six, and Bullet received a fearful bayonet wound in the fierce fighting at Eutaw Springs which in effect completed the redemption of South Carolina and ended the war in that part of the Union. But with the high health that he had enjoyed from his earliest colthood, he recovered, and it was upon his back that some months later Lieutenant-Colonel Roger Alton—twice promoted for gallantry—rode from recovered Charles Town to Alton House to claim his wife, and to begin, with her aid and counsel, the joyous work of reconstructing the historic mansion in all the glory of architectural adornment to which its sturdy

A CAROLINA CAVALIER

walls invited its new master—for Roger was its master now, Col. Geoffrey Alton having passed away, full of years and of honors.

Day by day, Helen went every morning to Bullet's paddock—for she would not have him confined to a stall—and paid him his pension of sugar plums. And even when the coming of a little Geoffrey Alton to be the future heir of Alton House, held her prisoner for a time, she did not forget, but sent the daily dole by trusty hands, with loving messages which she firmly believed the noble animal understood. Perhaps he did, for who shall set a limit to understanding where love sends greetings?



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